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SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND RAPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN PREMODERN GERMAN
AND EUROPEAN LITERATURE



FUNDAMENTALS OF MEDIEVAL
AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE

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Sexual Violence and Rape in the Middle Ages

Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture

Edited by
Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge

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Introduction

'Violence' and 'rape' are words for terrible things that have happened to women, and sometimes to men as well, throughout times. The issues they circumscribe continue to plague the modern world, and women are not free to go wherever they would like to, and this not even in the most advanced countries in the Western world, simply out of fear for what might happen to them if they are alone and exposed to men's (sometimes also women's) sexual attacks and other forms of aggression. Moreover, even within the most secluded and protected social conditions, say, marriage, violence can erupt, and might even have more devastating consequences because the victim does not easily, if at all, find protection from society, the laws, the Church, or the government because of the limitation of external control within the private sphere of marriage.

Of course, people would not be people, as we would have to admit, if they did not display both positive and negative character traits, strengths, and weaknesses. By the same token, it goes without saying that this is not at all any kind of excuse for the manifestation of this form of violence, either in the past or in the present, in the Western or the Eastern world. Every society is based on the principle that power is distributed according to some structural concepts, and hence that there are institutions and individuals who control others, maintain some kind of law and order, and establish general rules, morals, and ethics to live by and under which everyone is supposed to submit. History, as we know only too well, is filled with power struggles and violence, and in these conflicts, both public and private, there are winners and losers, perpetrators/victors and victims. The victims regularly suffer from physical violent acts, are killed in battle, executed as a form of punishment, tortured, abused, or violated in a myriad of ways. Normally, however, we know much more of and about the winners and much less about the losers because history (chronicles) is generally written (commissioned) by the former, and it is much more difficult to hear the voices of the latter—the Old English heroic poem "The Battle of Maldon" being a remarkable exception. This general rule also applies, tragically, to the suffering of rape victims.

All social, military, and political structures can break down and can get lost at a moment's notice because violence is hardly containable, not even in some of the most controlled situations. War, one of its worst manifestations, has been waged throughout times, both in the Middle Ages and today. In fact, it would be a drastic

travesty, or naïveté, to assume that our modern world is less violent than in the past, though the types of conflicts and the locations of where (military) violence occurs have changed, along with the types of weapons and strategies employed by the various sides.¹ Harmonious stability is only a temporary stage, though we always seem to aim for it. Peace and justice are also ideals that have been pursued throughout history, yet the times in which they dominated have been much too fleeting and have normally constituted nothing but a dream, or a utopia. Nevertheless, without aspiring for it, society would not be able to function, though reality regularly intervenes and challenges the ideals which poets, artists, philosophers, and theologians advocate and promote.

Keeping this fragile condition of human existence in mind, and hence the constant need to strive for the improvement of our lives, for the happiness of each individual, we quickly realize the absolute and fundamental need of literature, the arts, music, and philosophy as intellectual and aesthetic means to reflect upon and, perhaps, even to achieve some of those idealistic goals. A society that is not accepting the critical relevance of poetry or visual arts would be monstrous, since it would be a clear indication of its unwillingness to face any of its endemic problems and challenges insofar as literature represents the moral and ethical voice of a people. Poetry, for instance, does not only serve as a literary framework for emotions. On the contrary, poetry often has been, and continues to be, the literary mouthpiece for significant concerns for society at large. *Mutatis mutandis*, this also applies to romances, plays, epics, and other forms of literature. As Noël Menuge argues, and as Jeremy Goldberg confirms, for instance, fictional texts “offer an alternative window onto the emotional world of the ward, but there is also a remarkable reflexive relationship between legal and romance narratives.”²

Literature, we might say, at the risk of preaching to the converted, has always been one of the central media of human consciousness and has offered both descriptive and prescriptive models of human interaction, hence also of reflections of how human beings have interacted with each other or should relate to one another. In fact, literary texts, regarded in this light, prove to be powerful reflections of society to come to terms with its endemic and external problems and crises because human life is always reflected in texts (and art) and has in turn determined texts, that is, the literary discourse. Hence, to study violence and rape—two iconic examples of the larger issue we are concerned with—through the literary lens does not constitute a deviation from or neglect of the really important matters outside of the fictional domain, quite on the contrary. There is no doubt

¹ See the thoroughly researched contributions about penal law, war, and other conflicts by Heiduk, Höfert, and Ulrichs, *Krieg und Verbrechen*, 1997; see also Contamine, *La Guerre au moyen-âge*, 1980; War and Chivalry, 1981; Hale, *War and Society*, 1985.

² James Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship*, 2001, 95–99; Goldberg, *Communal Discord*, 2008, 16.

that these two criminal actions, practically always intimately linked with each other—specifically one leading to the other, or one providing the basis for the other—demand a critical examination, but there are no criteria that would force us to limit our approaches to criminology, sociology, psychology, and other, more scientifically based disciplines. We also need to keep in mind how much the literary, or artistic, discourse reflects upon these aspects and promises to yield important insights insofar as it was created by poets and artists who were consistently concerned with the social interaction among people or the tragic lack thereof. And their texts, or art works, were listened to or read by audiences; hence they must have had some impact on the public, or they would not have been preserved, often in multiple, sometimes even numerous, copies.

Generally speaking, individual authors—following I will focus only on literature, but all the other areas in the humanities and visual arts are always implied as well—tend to reflect what might be the basic mentality of a society, or they make a significant contribution to the formation process determining this mentality. So, looking at literary texts from a specific time can allow us to investigate also how that society responded to violence and rape.³

Consequently, the only reasonable approach for this study can be to focus on specific types of violence that occur within a society and are negatively affecting individuals as victims. Concretely, then, violence against and rape of women prove to be most critical issues that can and must be pragmatically addressed, despite countless efforts by patriarchal society to sweep them under the carpet. I intend to expose them to a literary analysis and thus aim for a critical approach to the history of mentality. Understanding how this form of violence was viewed and dealt with in the past allows us, in multiple ways, to gain insight into the historical dimensions of this violence today, which in turn provides us with the tools necessary to establish pragmatic instruments to cope with these issues in the future. After all, the discussion of rape as presented in medieval texts, for instance, provides an important framework for the establishment of critical sensitivity and creates an awareness what rape could mean for the individual victim and for society at large.⁴

As a proviso, we would have to be realistic and sober enough to understand that violence at large will not go away, irrespective of all barriers that society might erect against it, and by the same token violence against women, or domestic violence, will constitute problems later as well. As cynical as it might sound, human nature is apparently not adequately conditioned for totally peaceful interaction and a harmonious community. However, the critical discussion of violence, whether through a sociological or a criminological lens, by way of

³ Brunner, ed. *Der Krieg im Mittelalter*, 1999.

⁴ Classen, "Diskursthema," 2008, 49–62.

historical documents or literary texts, promises to yield concrete results, even if ever so minuscule, which makes it so important and relevant also to look into the world of medieval and early modern literature.⁵

But why would we want to use literary texts from the Middle Ages, of all possible source material, for an investigation of how gender conflicts of the worst kind were dealt with, how individuals coped with them in the past, and, by the same token, what we moderns ought to do about them? Several preliminary observations lend themselves right away to support this approach. (Domestic) violence and rape are highly thorny and conflict-ridden problems, and they regularly escape easy solutions because they exist below the public radar screen and commonly operate in a private realm. They erupt within all kinds of contexts, and for a host of reasons, whether yesterday or today, and under all kinds of conditions. Perpetrators of this type of violence cannot be dealt with easily because they are hard to identify and often find general support by society, especially if this form of violence supports the basic male power structure, which in turn facilitates the application of violence against women. Imprisonment or even worse penalties do not solve much, neither for the offender nor for the victim, even though they prove to be necessary many times irrespective of their effectiveness. Nevertheless, the first step in dealing with sexual transgression consists of addressing it critically, which is one of the essential tasks of the literary discourse.

My project here does not, of course, aim for any grand analysis or solution, and it does not pretend to be more insightful, practical, or effective than those studies carried out by those traditionally concerned with this kind of crime; hence by those prepared and qualified to deal with such problems through a professional, i.e., legal, psychological, or medical training. Instead, I want to examine how violence and rape have been dealt with in the past, especially by medieval German and their contemporary European poets. Other scholars have already investigated parallel examples in English, French, and Spanish medieval literature where individual men either mistreat women or go so far as to rape them, but my focus promises to uncover a huge discourse on rape in western and central medieval Europe.⁶

⁵ Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt*, 1996; id., *Zeiten des Schreckens*, 2002. He is, of course, by far not the first to espouse and elaborate on such thoughts; see Popitz, "Gewalt," 1986, 68–106, esp. 87–89. Sofsky's concept of violence being a character trait beyond all cultural conditions has been met with considerable criticism; see, for example, Nedelmann, "Gewaltsoziologie am Scheideweg," 1997, 59–85, esp. 68–77. For Girard, *La Violence et le sacré*, 1974, violence also appears to be a cultural and anthropological constant.

⁶ Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); see also eadem, "Camouflaging Rape," 1985, 361–73. Kellner, "Gewalt und Minne," 1997, 33–66.

We know that ancient and medieval laws treated rape harshly as a severely punishable act, which, under specific circumstances, could easily be persecuted with the death penalty.⁷ Hence, to claim that rape was not of any concern for late-medieval, or pre-industrial women, as Roy Porter has suggested, is completely out of the question and a rather gross misreading of the historical, legal, and literary evidence.⁸ As Jeremy Goldberg observes,

What emerges is that the woman's consent was recognized as a pertinent issue both in respect of abduction and of rape. In the former case the woman's consent comes, however, occluded by consideration of the consent of a father or husband, such that a woman could be abducted even though she consented to her own abduction. The same is not true in respect of rape. Here the woman's lack of consent is repeatedly, if only implicitly, emphasized in rape narratives by reference to the force or violence used against her.⁹

In the mythological context the rape of a woman has repeatedly been used as the platform for the explanation of why a culture, or a civilization, rose to power or failed again; in other words, the literary and historical treatment of rape has often provided an ideological explanation for the foundation or collapse of a kingdom or a country, predicated on the treatment of women under men's rules.¹⁰ There is no doubt that medieval authorities also and harshly condemned rape, but the repeated issuance of respective laws both by the Church and the secular institutions throughout time indicates how little those laws were truly effective.¹¹ As Jaqueline Murray notes, "Rape, despite its violence to women's bodies, was also treated very much as a male experience, and both literary and legal sources examined it from the perspective of how this crime might harm or undermine patriarchal society."¹²

Sadly enough, rape has continued to threaten mostly women throughout the centuries until today, but this tragic situation also allows for excellent comparative

⁷ See, for instance, *Rape*, ed. Tomaselli and Porter, 1989; Doblhofer, *Vergewaltigung in der Antike*, 1994); *Rape in Antiquity*, 1997; Swärdh, *Rape and Religion*, 2003. This does not exhaust the legion of relevant research literature at all.

⁸ Porter, "Rape," 1994, 216–36; against him, Wolfthal, "'Douleur sur toutes autres,'" 1998, 41–70.

⁹ Goldberg, *Communal Discord*, 166. He also refers to the thirteenth-century legal treatise known as *Britton* which explicitly defines rape as "a felony of violence by a man inflicted on the body of a woman, whether she be a virgin or otherwise . . ." Moreover, as Goldberg adds, "The legal framework that underpinned medieval rape narratives, however, required more than just an assertion that force or violence had been used against the victim. It demanded proof" (166). See also Phillips, "Written on the Body," 2000, 125–44.

¹⁰ Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia*, 2008.

¹¹ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 1987.

¹² Murray, "Hiding Behind the Universal Man," 1996, 136. For the treatment of rape in the East, see Levin, "Eastern Orthodox Christianity," 1996, 340. For the situation of raped women in late-medieval French towns, see Rossiaud, "Prostitution," 1985, 83–86.

studies regarding women's legal status at specific periods in terms of ecclesiastical and secular laws.¹³ And, as I have observed already above, physical conflicts between the genders depend and reflect upon larger issues involving the entire society; hence the great interest in the topic of rape as dealt with in medieval literature, which might ultimately serve as a mirror of modern conditions, questions, and concerns as well, especially regards to violence at large and rape in particular.

Intriguingly, numerous literary examples in the history of German medieval literature address violence and even comment explicitly on the crime of raping women (or men). Many of these will be introduced here and studied in greater detail. Most of them were, perhaps surprisingly, written by men, a fact which makes this topic even more interesting since it sheds important light on the fundamental purpose of the literary discourse in the first place (see above). The issue itself comes to the foreground surprisingly often, a fact that deserves particular attention because we commonly assume, often quite rightly so, that medieval society was primarily patriarchal in its orientation and violent in its manifestation; hence would have been mostly quiet about rape.¹⁴ However, I would not want to imply that violence represents nothing but an impromptu manifestation of some aberrant behavior. Likewise, it would be wrong to claim that people are violent all the time, in all cultures, and at all age levels.¹⁵

Before we could decide this question, we would also have to ask what we mean by violence, whether we would limit it to the specific bodily injury done to another person (or to oneself), or whether we would also include structural, that is, political, cultural, religious, and economic aspects pertaining to violence, not to mention the huge dimension of non-physical violence (e.g., psychological). Following the model proposed by Manuel Braun and Cornelia Herberichs, in this study I will mostly focus on physical violence against women, and will include other forms of violence tantamount to rape only occasionally.¹⁶ Moreover, I'll limit myself to literary examples where the narrator explicitly thematizes violence as a perpetration against the female body, whether s/he expresses her/his opposition

¹³ Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 2001. See also Vitz, "Rereading Rape," 1997, 1–26; Sylvester, "Reading Rape," 1990, 120–35. For a concise overview with a good bibliography, see Kelly, "Rape," 2004, 519–20.

¹⁴ See, for example, *Violence and Society*, 1998.

¹⁵ Althoff, "Schranken der Gewalt," 1–23; see also Boockmann, "Das grausame Mittelalter," 1987, 1–9; Groebner, *Ungestalten*, 2003, 24–34; Braun and Herberichs, "Gewalt im Mittelalter," 2005, 12–14. For a critique of Norbert Elias's concept of civilization and progress, see Classen, "Naked Men," 2008, 143–69. For most recent discussions of Jewish-Christian relations in the high and late Middle Ages, especially in France and Austria, see the contributions by Rosa Alvarez Perez and Birgit Wiedl in the volume *Urban Space*, 2009.

¹⁶ Braun and Herberichs, "Gewalt im Mittelalter," 15–16; for a much broader definition, see Hugger, "Elemente einer Kulturanthropologie der Gewalt," 1995, 22.

or approval. The decisive approach will be whether violence as such even finds an expression and is being reflected upon.¹⁷

In his analysis of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Helmut Brackert identifies a long list of women who experience sorrow and pain because of male behavior and actions, arguing for a close correlation between male knighthood and female suffering.¹⁸ He adds, however, the curious observation that Wolfram's *Parzival* reflects deep-seated conflicts and worries concerning the entire world insofar as violence permeates even the most sacred refuge, the Grail kingdom. Even when a general law has been issued to abstain from violence and killing, the knights protecting the Grail are still called upon to fight or, if necessary, to kill any hostile intruder. Moreover, as Brackert observes, something is fundamentally wrong in the Grail society when its select few knights are not allowed to marry, obviously because this seems to be the only pragmatic solution to avoid any further experiences of sorrow affecting everyone. He concludes, raising the suggestive question: "Can a world be alright where the loyalty pledged by the main characters always remains only a part of the experience of sorrow, and where these characters do not experience any consolation despite all attempts by the narrator to appease our concerns?" (159). Brackert accuses the entire world of chivalry as reflected by Wolfram, among others, as duplicitous and hypocritical insofar as courtly love only serves to prod men to ever new efforts to demonstrate their manliness which they can achieve only by participating in tournaments and wars, all of them happening far away from home, thereby constantly leaving their beloved and wives behind, hence causing them sorrow.

Ultimately, as Wolfram's *Parzival* reveals, according to Brackert, the courtly system is lacking in meaningfulness ("Sinnlosigkeit des Systems," 153) because the principles of courtly love which basically aim at the establishment of harmonious and solid partner relationships simultaneously force the knights to abandon the women and thus create feelings of loneliness, fear, and sorrow (153). But he subsequently seems to ignore the global healing process at the end of the romance which is brought about by a new harmony, love, and mutual respect among the genders. Still, the courtly world is deeply characterized by sorrow, pain, and suffering, primarily experienced by women. Elisabeth Lienert concurs with him, emphasizing that almost every aspect in Wolfram's *Parzival* is determined by violence, although she also admits that this violence affects both women and men. She argues, reflecting also the vast body of comparable examples in medieval literature, that "Gewalt wird immer von Männern ausgeübt—gegen Männer und Frauen. Frauen sind verstrickt als Opfer (direkt oder indirekt), aber auch als

¹⁷ Braun and Herberichs, "Gewalt im Mittelalter," 19; see also Riches, "The Phenomenon," 1986, 1–27; *The Civilization of Crime*, 1996.

¹⁸ Brackert, "'der Iac,'" 1989, 143–63.

Anstifterinnen zu Gewalt—und als solche grundsätzlich problematisch” (Violence is always carried out by men—against men and women. Women are involved as victims (directly or indirectly), but also as instigators of violence—and in this regard fundamentally problematic).¹⁹ She concedes that we can find short references here and there, particularly in the world of King Arthur, to efforts to establish peace, and to limit the use of violence, but she discounts these efforts as utopian and unrealistic (224).

Joachim Bumke emphasizes that numerous courtly epics contain striking examples of the absolute superiority of the husband over his wife. He was, as Bumke comments, entitled to abandon her to go on year-long adventures; he could lock her in and have her guarded like a prisoner; he could ridicule and humiliate her in public; he could order her not to speak at all, otherwise she would face the death penalty; and he could force her to do the work of a lowly servant. Moreover, “Wenn der Ehemann einen Verdacht auf Untreue gegen seine Frau hegte, waren seiner Strafgewalt keine Grenzen gesetzt” (466; When the husband suspected his wife of having committed adultery, there was no limit to his power to punish her). And the husband could mete out corporal punishment at any time and without any restraint.

At face value, all the examples adduced by Bumke confirm his observation and would support general assumptions about medieval women’s utter lack of any rights. Despite all praise and admiration, at least within the context of courtly love, so Bumke, medieval women enjoyed not much more than the status of female slaves who could be beaten at random and were not allowed to complain: “corporal punishment by the husband was common also at other occasions” (466).²⁰

Since I assume that violence against women has never been a specific strategy exclusively characteristic of one individual period or culture, I will begin my analysis with a critical reading of representative works from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Then I will extend my investigation far beyond the traditional limits of the medieval period and examine popular novels, short verse and prose narratives, and folk songs from far into the sixteenth century in which, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, commonly traditional medieval themes, subject matters, and ideas find their continuation. As we will observe, similarly as in Middle English and Middle French literature, poets addressed the theme quite commonly; in fact, there was a global discourse on rape. To what extent the various literary treatments ultimately established critical mass, if we can use this term in this

¹⁹ Lienert, “Zur Diskursivität,” 2002, 224.

²⁰ Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, 466: “Die Frau selber von den Schwächen ihres Geschlechts sprechen zu lassen, war ein besonders wirkungsvolles Darstellungsmittel” (To make a woman talk herself about the weaknesses of her gender was a particularly effective means of [literary] presentation).

context, forcing society to combat this type of criminal behavior, remains to be seen. But we can be certain that medieval German poets consistently addressed the issue at stake here, very much like their European contemporaries, and probed avenues and strategies how to come to terms with rape both within the family (father-daughter relationship, for instance²¹) and outside (rapist knight). The large number of specific cases included in the various literary examples unmistakably indicates the extent to which rape was actually discussed throughout time and in the various courtly cultures. It was a matter of public concern!

Some intriguing examples from the French tradition might help to pinpoint a most illuminating feature of the discourse on rape in medieval literature. In the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* from ca. 1456 to 1467, a collection of mostly highly entertaining and witty tales, deeply determined by erotic themes and motifs, rape emerges numerous times and is discussed from various perspectives. In the third tale, for instance, which shares many similarities with one composed by Heinrich Kaufringer ("Der feige Ehemann," see my discussion in this book), a young Scottish mercenary wants to seduce a merchant's wife, but she refuses him, until her husband conceives an idea to teach him a lesson. He armors himself, hides behind the bed, and awaits the lover, whom his wife in the meantime has invited to visit her, upon the merchant's instigation because he wants to punish this unwelcome wooer. But the Scot, not knowing about the husband's presence, demonstrates his great strength to the wife, uttering that he would easily kill the merchant, if he were present, and then proceeds with the sexual act. The husband is too scared to come out of his hiding place, and so does nothing to defend his wife from being raped twice.

In the seventeenth tale a high ranking Parisian administrator wants to rape one of his old wife's maids, but the latter defies him with a trick, escapes and makes him to a fool, exposing his lustfulness to her mistress who severely condemns her husband, chastising him bitterly. In the twenty-fourth tale, a count attempts to rape a country girl, but she overcomes him by resorting to cunning and deceiving him, pretending, once she is in the greatest danger, that she as well would be happy to sleep with him, except that he would have to remove his boots. She helps him halfway out of one of them and then runs away to safety, whereas he is incapacitated of walking because of the oddly sitting boot. Moreover, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* contain many other examples of sexual violence, playing with the whole gamut of transgressions, lustfulness, witticism, and deceptions, all aiming at success in matters of love and the erotic. We are regularly invited to laugh, but in reality we are confronted with severe criticism against this type of criminal behavior. In fact, rape and attempted rape, but then also many other

²¹ Burrichter, "Väter und Töchter," 2009, 75–89.

forms of seduction and sexual violence surface in this collection of narratives, all signaling how much we are dealing with serious problems, although we are invited to laugh about them as well.²²

As we will see, medieval and early-modern German authors pursued similar perspectives, and raised the same issues. The examples of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* confirm, however, how pervasive the theme of rape was throughout the entire time period and in many different cultures. Most significantly, medieval poets invited their audiences, so it seems, both to cry about and to protest against the criminal act of rape, and yet also to laugh and snicker about women's suffering. The literary treatment of rape in the Middle Ages proves to be an extremely complex matter and deserves further investigation.²³

²² For an English translation, see Douglas, *One Hundred*, 1899 [?]), here cited from the online version at: http://www.archive.org/stream/hundredmerrytale00hazl/hundredmerrytale00hazl_djvu.txt

²³ I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Marilyn Sandidge, Westfield State University, MA, for her careful reading of the manuscript. All remaining mistakes are, of course, my own.

Chapter 1

Female Suffering and Rape in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*

Although medieval literature (at least since the eleventh and early twelfth century) is clearly determined by the concept of highly esoteric courtly love, we should be aware of the many rather profound and disturbing problems underlying that ideal. It was delicately introduced since ca. 1100 by the Occitan troubadours in Southern France—here disregarding the Latin tradition—and then quickly developed all over Europe. It was upheld, and preserved in its dangerously fragile condition for hundreds of years to come throughout the Middle Ages among the aristocracy, irrespective of countless detractors, critics, satirists, and clerical opponents already from day one. After all, as all love poets have clearly outlined in a myriad of ways, courtly love was not only a beautiful notion providing the stepping stone for individual happiness and erotic-sexual fulfillment; it also faced countless challenges ranging from disappointment and frustration to anger and wrath, and finally to violence, including sexual transgression.

Good examples prove to be William IX¹ and Andreas Capellanus (*De amore*, ca. 1190),² but then also *Mauritius von Craûn* (ca. 1220/1230).³ Insufficient communication skills, egotism, selfishness, and lack of education, but then also carelessness, mean spirit, arrogance and hubris are some of the major aspects severely criticized in courtly literature, obviously in direct response to their evil impact on society at large, thus clearly injecting a sense of didacticism (Marie de France, ca. 1160–1200, Walther von der Vogelweide, ca. 1200–1220).⁴ It is self-evident that people have always experienced joy and sorrow in their interactions with others, and love would easily rank as the one emotion that has regularly

¹ Most recently, see Verhuyck, *De echte troubadours*, 2008; for a text edition, see *The Poetry of William VII*, 1982.

² Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, 2005; see also Andersen-Wyman, *Andreas Capellanus*, 2007.

³ See my chapter in this book.

⁴ I have discussed many of these questions already in my monograph *Verzweiflung und Hoffnung*, 2002. See now also the various contributions to *Courtly Arts*, 2006.

triggered the most painful and also exhilarating feelings.⁵ Little wonder that courtly literature also explored these aspects, perhaps primarily so. Courtly romances that were spawned all over Europe—the earliest ones composed by Chrétien de Troyes and the anonymous author of *Partonopeus de Blois*—do not naively depict a courtly world where happiness rules in an idyllic setting.⁶ Instead, the protagonists are regularly challenged both in military, knightly terms, and so also in regard to their relationship with their loved ones, whether within marriage or outside.⁷ Violence often disrupts even in seemingly most harmonious situations, and struggle and strife characterize most, if not all, courtly narratives, whether conditioned by external or internal tensions, disagreements, or misunderstandings.

C. Stephen Jaeger has rightly emphasized how much courtly literature since its inception has served poignantly for the education process of the aristocratic class, instructing the members of the various courts to pay attention to the *mores*, the courtly ideals, and the social and ethical values displayed by the courtly protagonists.⁸ After all, values do not seem to be innate in human existence and cannot be handed down to the next generation through the genes; instead they must be learned by every individual all over again, which attributes courtly literature such enormous importance for the idealistic development of society because it transformed an entire world and provided it with an ethical, moral, but also intellectual and emotional framework for growth and profound developments; hence culture at large.⁹ Not surprisingly, as we still experience today, one of the most problematic relationships has always been the one between the two genders, which easily explains the enormous degree of violence which certainly applies to the courtly world as well. As an important aside, this very same issue seems to vex us until today, whether we think of domestic violence, rape, abandonment, adultery, etc., all somehow connected with gender conflicts, with love, and sexuality.

More specifically, and tragically, as we can observe often, women prove to be highly susceptible to sexual violence, hence rape, as chroniclers, authors of legal

⁵ Gottfried von Strassburg predicated his entire romance *Tristan* on the dialectics of joy and sorrow, as he explicitly discusses in the prologue to his text. Here quoted from Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, 1980, vol. 1, 1–244.

⁶ A number of contributors to *The Cambridge Companion*, 2000, address the downside and dangerous aspects of courtly romance, and so also gender relationships.

⁷ For a penetrating analysis of conflicts and tensions resulting from courtly love, wooing, and men's strife to win their ladies' favor in courtly love poetry, see Kaplowitt, *The Ennobling Power*, 1986.

⁸ Jaeger, *The Origins*, 1985. Schultz, *Courtly Love*, 2006, has impressively picked up some of the ideas by Jaeger and pursued them in light of gender-theory and the role of the body in the formation of courtly culture.

⁹ Bumke, "Höfische Körper," 1994, 67–102. He gives full credit to Jaeger for his insightful observations regarding the didactic purposes of courtly literature.

texts, theologians, and also poets report throughout the ages.¹⁰ The courtly world was deeply troubled by this form of transgression, as scholars have observed repeatedly.¹¹ But the topic of rape still finds very little attention within this context, especially when we investigate some of the 'classical' romances, whereas rape in the world of the animal fables (*Reinhart Fuchs*),¹² of the *fabliaux*, of the allegorical romance (e.g., *Roman de la rose*), and the heroic epic has been studied quite extensively.¹³ Significantly, women's victimization happens both at the edge of the courtly world (see the comments by Andreas Capellanus) and also in its very heart, near or at King Arthur's court (see Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*). Contrary to previous opinions by scholars working on the issue of rape, however, this sexual crime is not as much hidden or veiled as we might assume, and many times male authors unequivocally addressed this topic in their texts, mostly attacking it as a severe violation of women's individuality and also as a challenge to patriarchal rule, especially in the case of a married woman as the victim.¹⁴

In order to probe this issue further here I suggest to look at one of the best known works from the late twelfth century, Hartmann von Aue's Middle High German *Erec*, composed sometime around 1170, closely modeled after Chrétien de Troyes' eponymous romance.¹⁵ I will abstain from a comparative reading, which has already been offered by previous scholarship a number of times,¹⁶ though Hartmann's source always needs to be kept in mind for a full understanding of the messages contained in the German version.

Certainly, the role of women in this and other works by Hartmann has already been thoroughly investigated from many different perspectives.¹⁷ Similarly, the experience of pain and the suffering body have also been the object of careful interpretations, albeit this does not necessarily imply the particular focus on rape, which I will pursue here.¹⁸ The interest in Hartmann's theological stance has also

¹⁰ Brundage, *Law, Sex*, 1987, 3, 14, 47–48, et passim; Classen, "Medieval," 1991, 308–10; see also Russell, "Rape," 1989, 312–16, for a discussion of rape today. For a solid bibliography on the relevant sources and secondary literature, see Margolis, "Rape," 2004, 783–89.

¹¹ Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 1991; Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, 2001.

¹² Widmaier, *Das Recht*, 1993.

¹³ There would be no need to emphasize how much rape has also been the topic of intensive legal and criminological discussions; see my introduction; for recent scholarly studies, see, for instance, Shaw, *Entwicklung*, 2005; *Unzucht – Notzucht – Vergewaltigung*, 2003; Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 2001; Meyer-Knees, *Verführung und sexuelle Gewalt*, 1992.

¹⁴ Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 2–11, et passim; Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, 17–20.

¹⁵ Corneau, "Hartmann von Aue," 1981, 506–09.

¹⁶ Most recently, see Haubrichs, "Die Narration," 2007, 415–33.

¹⁷ Carne, *Die Frauengestalten*, 1970, argues, very much in line with traditional patriarchal thinking, 59–60; for a specific analysis of the female protagonist in *Erec*, see Sterba, "The Question," 1991, 57–68.

¹⁸ Pincikowski, "The Body in Pain," 2005, 105–23.

been quite extensive, as well as the interest in his positions regarding shame, an individual's social position, guilt, joy, and the value system determining courtly society.¹⁹ As we know well, the critical issue for Erec and his wife proves to be how to balance private with public concerns, or how to pursue one's social responsibilities without losing sight of individual needs and desires.

Instead, following I will analyze the specific form of violence experienced by his wife, Enite, and other women, commonly and tragically associated with sexual transgression. This aspect undoubtedly deserves further attention because heretofore rather traditional critics have dominated this field and have somehow, whether deliberately or not, mollified the explicit criticism of Erec in his behavior toward his wife by referring to global ethical issues, theological explanations, and narrative strategies, specifically side-stepping more or less successfully the question concerning the gender relationships and the female protagonist's suffering because of her husband and other men.²⁰

Hartmann introduces us in *Erec* to a most impressive world of courtly culture, with knighthood, chivalry, tournaments, and glorious fights against robbers, giants, dwarfs, and other enemies—all typical opponents who challenge medieval knights²¹—which ultimately allow the male protagonist to regain previously lost honor and to reach the greatest height of courtly existence. Nevertheless, as we have to realize just too quickly, the path—or rather the double course (*doppelter*

¹⁹ See, for instance, Corneau, *Hartmann von Aue*, 1966; Eroms, *Vreude*, 1969; Kaiser, *Textauslegung*, 1978; Wetzlmair, *Zum Problem der Schuld*, 1997; for a recent introduction with a solid summary of the previous research, see Wolf, *Einführung*, 2007.

²⁰ See, for example, Voss, *Die Artusepik*, 1983; most frustrating in this regard proves to be the monograph by Giesa, *Märchenstruktur*, 1987, 101–21, focusing, practically, only on Erec's character development. For older scholarship, though not much more helpful for our investigation, see the contributions to *Hartmann von Aue*, 1973.

²¹ Traditional scholarship has generally evaluated medieval men's attitude toward women as rather ambiguous, adulating them as their courtly ladies, but beating them up easily when they are wives, or mistreating them in other contexts, as if they had been nothing but chattel. Bumke, *Höfische Kultur*, vol. 2, 464: "Nicht selten wurde im höfischen Epos davon erzählt, daß Frauen benachteiligt, entwürdigt, gequält und geschlagen wurden. Diese Motive standen in einem merkwürdigen Kontrast zu der offiziellen Frauenverherrlichung der Gattung. Aber es scheint so, als hätten die Erzähler diesen Gegensatz gar nicht bemerkt. . . . Es konnte auch keine Verwunderung erregen, wenn Frauen wie Sachen behandelt wurden (Quite regularly we hear in courtly romances that women are disadvantaged, dishonored, tortured, and beaten. These motifs stood in an odd contrast to the official adulation of women in this genre. But it seems as if the narrators had not noticed this conflict It did not arouse any surprise when women were treated like objects). These are facts that cannot be denied, but the question really proves to be how we have to evaluate such descriptions and what the relevant context might be. We know about this form of sexual abuse and domestic violence because the poets address these issues most explicitly. I have dealt with this topic already in my monograph *The Power of a Woman's Voice*, 2007, ch. six, esp. with regard to Hartmann von Aue, 222–26.

*Kursus*²²)—toward that goal is riddled with countless problems and challenges that also, and most deeply, affect Erec's wife, Enite.²³ Closely examined, we can find numerous instances where she experiences most painful suffering, both physical and spiritual, but we can even take one step further and claim that Enite undergoes, in a variety of ways, rape in multiple situations, although she has never to suffer from sexual penetration as a result of violent abuse.

Most significantly, however, the male author has to be credited with signaling very explicitly what form of crime, or unjust suffering, the female protagonist is facing, expressing undoubtedly his firm opposition, alerting his audience to a general problem that seems to have been rampant at his time and that needed to be addressed very clearly as a criminal transgression. Seen in this light, the courtly romance suddenly emerges as a profoundly didactic tool to influence courtly society by profiling the dangers and consequences of sexual transgression for everyone involved.

The problematic condition of the couple's departure from their court once Erec has learned from his wife the truth about the devastating decline of his own social reputation has often been discussed (Erec's "verligen," or wasting his time in bed, ignoring his social and knightly obligations).²⁴ But it is worth reconsidering how the male protagonist responds to Enite's unintended revelation. First of all, she feels very uncertain about their love relationship and still displays much insecurity, probably due to her young age,²⁵ so she does not dare to relate to him directly what is the common talk at court where people severely, but not openly, criticize Erec's failure to uphold the standards of chivalric norms and to live up to the general expectations in his leadership as king (3009–12). All she knows is to utter one day, while he is resting his head in her lap, seemingly asleep, her deep grief about all those curses concerning her husband that she has heard at court. But Erec is not asleep, and he immediately gets up and forces his wife to tell him all she knows, reminding her of his role as *paterfamilias*, implicitly threatening her with severe consequences, possibly a beating (3039–44), or worse, if she does not obey his order.

Under this condition, Enite confesses what the rumors about him say, but she first requests from him not to get angry with her (3047–49). Although he seems to have given her this promise, his immediate reaction demonstrates the very

²² For a discussion of Hugo Kuhn's famous dictum, which has regained in favor despite previous criticism, see Wolf, *Einführung*, 45–46.

²³ Here I will quote from Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, 2003; cf. the latest critical edition: *Erec von Hartmann von Aue*, 2006; see also the recent English translation in *Arthurian Romances*, 2001. I am using, however, my own translations. For an alternative edition, with excellent commentary, see Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, 2004.

²⁴ Blosen, "Noch einmal," 1976, 81–109; Rawanake, "Erec's verligen," 1988, 93–115.

²⁵ See the contributions to *Young Medieval Women*, 1999.

opposite, another expression of his impulsiveness, lack of trustworthiness, and rash behavior. Even though he does not blame her directly, he orders her to accompany him on his next round of adventures (the second *Kursus*), without taking along any servant, maid, or squire, dismissing all features and comfortable aspects of the courtly world. Moreover, and in this regard Erec clearly reveals his violent nature, he forbids her to speak or to utter any word, whatever she might hear or see (3098–3102). Insofar as speaking, and hence communication, constitute the very basics of human nature, Erec has declared open warfare against his own wife, aggressively making her responsible in many ways for his own failing after having become a temporary ‘victim’ of sexuality and the pleasures of marital life.²⁶

On several occasions, however, as the narrator explains quite openly, Erec would, without her help, run into severe problems in fighting off enemies that want to kill him and abduct, hence also rape, his wife. Enite considers each time the heavy risk involved for her if she were not to warn her husband about the imminent danger, and each time she transgresses his ban not to speak and can thus prepare him in time to get ready for the combat, whether against robbers or against a hostile count.

As scholars have often observed, the entire situation proves to be enormously complicated and conflictual because Erec considers Enite in an unspecified way as responsible for his neglect to observe the principles of knighthood at his own court. He does no longer want to hear a word from her, yet he has to realize, to his own initial and rather profound embarrassment, that it is not good enough to be well armored, highly trained as a knight, and sufficiently strong to resist all military challenges. In fact, his own helmet makes it practically impossible for him to hear and see, so against his own intentions he has to rely entirely on Enite in this regard who substitutes for his eyes and ears. Nevertheless, Erec gets extremely angry with her after he has defeated his opponents because she has blatantly disobeyed his order and thereby undermined his patriarchal authority.²⁷ In fact, he does not only punish her by forcing his wife to take care of an increasing number of horses, a task most unworthy for her as a queen who hardly can handle these animals all by herself—not to mention the sexual symbolism of horses signifying women’s alleged hyper sexuality. He also threatens to kill her, exerting his absolute power as *paterfamilias*. Certainly, this does not constitute ‘rape’ in the usual sense of the word, but it establishes a basis for himself and any other man,

²⁶ McConeghy, “Women’s Speech,” 1987, 772–78; Bussmann, “*Do Sprah*,” 2005, 1–29; Bumke, *Der “Erec,”* 2006, 113–28.

²⁷ The situation in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Erec* proves to be quite different because here Enide is given plenty of opportunities to talk, to explain what she has heard, and to discuss her husband’s and her own problem, in a way raising the scepter of women’s excessive verbosity, which in a way seems to justify Erec’s ban on Enide’s speech, though even there Erec’s decision has to be characterized as significantly flawed; see Wolf, *Einführung*, 60.

as we will see, to abuse her as they please, and hence also to take her sexually by force.

This is not to ignore a certain degree of responsibility on the part of Enite who had not understood how to assume the function of a wife and queen; hence had submitted, as much as Erec, to the overwhelming seductiveness of sexuality. Moreover, she did not know how to raise her voice and to alert him to the danger of ignoring all their social duties as a couple ruling over a country. However, the extenuating circumstances need to be considered as well before putting too much blame on her, especially in the way as Erec does, who abuses her, at any rate, as a scapegoat for his own shortcomings. Initially he had quickly wooed her, then married her, and thereupon had returned to his kingdom where he was supposed to assume his royal obligations. But both lost themselves in marital blissfulness and focused on their own physical pleasures only to the complete neglect of courtly society.

Whereas Enite had failed to speak up while still back home and to reprimand him for having entirely neglected his duties as king, she now makes every possible effort to communicate with him during their journey in order to save at least his life. Nevertheless, Erec never thanks her for her brave actions in disregarding his own orders and warning him; instead he only gets angrier and can hardly restrain himself. His brutality and recklessness find full expression in the narrator's negative comments. Whatever Enite's faults might have been in the past, her husband is now making her the victim of his own aggression with which he hopes to compensate for his previous lack of circumspection and ignorance.

In the early stage of their marriage Erec had been entirely committed to sexual pleasures, now he has turned entirely to knighthood, so despite his victories he is still far away from the actual goal, growing into a mature adult and a fully functioning member of courtly society. Moreover, by leaving the court all by himself, accompanied only by his wife, he is also giving up his royal status. In this process, however, he also robs Enite of all comforts of courtly life and forces her to take on the same road to knightly self-fulfillment: adventure.²⁸

Even though we would not be justified to talk about rape in this case, Enite is soon enough put into a situation where she becomes the object of sexual persecutions, which clearly signals that the previous forms of violence in a way also have to be read in that light, at least paving the way for such a possibility. Of course, the narrator never expresses any doubt about the deep love between these two people, but this does not mean that Erec could be exculpated for his brutal, unjustified behavior toward her. We can clearly perceive how much the husband's mistreatment of his wife invites other men to try to seduce her and hence to violate

²⁸ For the interpretation of this scene in Chrétien, see Nitze, "The Romance of Erec," 1914, 445–89; Cormier, "Cinq motifs," 2004, 189–207; now see also Haubrichs, "Die Narration," 417.

her private space, that is, to conquer her sexually and to treat her as chattel that can be captured by another man.

Indeed, in a later scene when the couple is resting in an inn, a hasty and rash count (unnamed here) has no inhibition to approach the lady and to try his luck with her, as if she were an object of love and could be purchased or easily pried out of her husband's hands. He aggressively moves into the seemingly empty space, believing that Enite would be an easy prey. The narrator emphasizes, however, that the count had so far displayed a good character and embraced all courtly values (*triuwen*, 3689). Only now, by contrast, because he is overwhelmed by love—or rather sexual attraction—for this strange woman who seems to be available to any male considering the way her husband is treating her, the worst character trait emerges in him and transforms him into a potentially sexual criminal.

Courtly love (*minne*, 3692) is blamed for this change of mind. In fact, Hartmann explicitly underscores the severe transgression that the count is about to commit: “vil manegen man diu werlt hât / der nimmer in dehein missetât / sînen vuoz verstieze / ob ins diu minne erlieze” (3698–702; there are many men in this world who would never step into any misdeed, except when love forces them to do so). In other words, rape might well be a common experience because love, here better translated as sexuality, easily overpowers and subdues all rationality, ethics, and morality.

The count quickly imposes himself on Enite and encourages her to discard her husband because the latter obviously ignores, if not mistreats, her badly. Moreover, he emphasizes that he is the lord of the land and has almost infinite power to enforce his wish; hence he combines seduction with coercion. Enite at first tries to fend him off, pledging her total loyalty to Erec, but the count does not let go of her and begins with his threat: “iuwer wer ist mir hie ze kranc. / iuwer geselle / var swar er welle: / ir müezet hie mit mir bestân” (3833–36; your defense means little to me. Your companion may travel wherever he wants: [but] you have to stay with me). In other words, although he has not yet applied physical violence, he has removed all her freedom and wants to force her to become his wife. This is not sexual violence specifically, but the count is driven by sexual needs and has dismissed all and any concern about the wonderful woman's own wishes and desires. He goes so far as to belittle the apparently disinterested husband whom he does not respect much at all, so he puts Enite under enormous duress, which forces her to develop a most interesting rhetorical strategy. We will observe an intriguing parallel to that in late-thirteenth-century *Mai und Beaflor* where in the initial scene the Emperor father is trying to rape his own daughter.²⁹

²⁹ See my chapter on *Mai und Beaflor* in this book.

Enite succeeds in escaping the threat posed by the count because she resorts to a rhetorical strategy, and suddenly pretends to be in full agreement with her pursuer, when she laughs out loud (3842) as if she had not meant her resistance seriously. Her *list* (3842) consists of playing out the traditional fear women suffer from in their common dealings with men, whom she now generally accuses of being not trustworthy and liable of causing women pain (psychological and physical): "wîben michel leit geschehen" (3855; women experience much suffering). She pretends that Erec had kidnapped her from her parents' court, and that both roam the country in flight from their pursuers. In other words, she plays the role of a rape victim, knowing only too well that the count himself intends to do nothing else but to conquer her sexually. For that reason Enite does not hesitate to lie under oath—similarly as Isolde will do later in Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* (ca. 1210)—and pledges herself to the count, though she advises him to wait one night during which she would hide her husband's sword, making it safer for the count to kidnap her, which would be, according to her fictional account, the second time in her life. The sexual symbolism of the sword, representing Erec's genital, cannot be overlooked. Further, women can be bartered, it seems, and would be available sexually to any man who knows how to exert enough physical violence, as Enite's fake account about her suffering unmistakably indicates.

Whereas Erec had imposed an order of silence on her, she now resorts to most sophisticated rhetorical strategies to deceive the count and to gain some extra time from him during which she can finally alert her husband and escape together with him. As Susan L. Clark has observed, Enite is not all that far off in her deceptive report regarding her alleged violent destiny at Erec's hands. Claiming that the latter had abducted her as a child from her parents, she reveals the degree of ignorance she had been culpable of herself in her otherwise at first rather happy marriage. Duping the count, she gives him "a double-edged counsel" which later allows the couple to escape from this scene, although at night. After a hot pursuit, a fight breaks out with deadly consequence for the count, so Erec and Enite can flee at the end unscathed.³⁰ But there is no doubt that the husband has put his wife at greatest risk of being raped by the count. In fact, only because of her superior rhetorical skills, which he had tried, rather ironically, to suppress, and because of her intelligence in developing a counter strategy does she manage to trap the perpetrator in her scheme which grants the couple a couple of hours of respite from his attacks.

However, Hartmann was not content with playing only once with the horrendous possibility of the female protagonist being raped. As much as Erec is going through a seemingly endless series of profound challenges and at one point

³⁰ Clark, *Hartmann von Aue*, 1989, 70.

almost appears to have succumbed to all his struggles, falling from his horse as if dead, Enite experiences many different situations as well in which she has to fight back some of the worst possible threats. Not only does her husband treat her like a slave, or chattel, she is also facing the constant possibility of losing him in one of his battles against the robbers, against the count, against the dwarf king, and then against the two giants.³¹

As W. H. Jackson comments,

Women were at risk in Germany in the twelfth century in a society in which violence was prevalent, and in which women were prized, and vulnerable, as objects in the formation of alliances and the transmission of lands. Acts of violence against women, especially rape and abduction, were criminal offences long before the twelfth century. . . . The period from the tenth to the early thirteenth century thus shows a continuous legislative concern with crimes of violence against women, and a sharpening of the penalties for these crimes.³²

Enite demonstrates full awareness of this danger for women, and because such accounts of abduction and rape were so common, she has no difficulties in convincing the count of her alleged suffering at Erec's hand. In other words, the text dangerously teases with the allusion to and evocation of rape, apparently a rather wide-spread experience, as even this 'canonical' text from the Middle High German period signals most explicitly, not to mention Hartmann's source, Chrétien's *Erec*.³³

But 'rape' in a more broadly defined context can also happen to male members of the courtly world, as the horrible scene of knight Cardoc's abduction by the two giants indicates. Erec and Enite encounter his forlorn wife in the middle of the forest after they have said good-bye to the noble company at King Arthur's court. The devastated woman's miserable shrieking attracts them, and they soon enough learn of the terrifying news that the knight, her lover, had been kidnapped by the two monstrous figures who brutally torture their helpless prisoner in a most demeaning fashion. Although we often hear of violent clashes, stabbing, killing, and other forms of fighting, the giants' treatment of their prisoner represents one of the bloodiest scenes in Arthurian literature. They have fettered him on his horse, completely denuded, and whip him so badly and ferociously that the poor man is bleeding profusely (5408–11). Even worse, he has already lost so much

³¹ For good plot summaries, see Cormeau and Störmer, *Hartmann von Aue*, 1985, 178–93. See also Jackson, *Chivalry*, 1994, 109–34.

³² Jackson, *Chivalry*, 116–17.

³³ Sterba, "The Question, 1991, 57–68. She does not, however, concretely deal with the issue of rape; instead she offers a most insightful discussion of Enite's alleged guilt and societal prejudices against women.

blood that there is hardly any left in his body. In fact, his death is near (5417–23). Of course, there is no specific reference to sexual penetration, but the poor victim suffers severely in a deeply corporeal fashion, and his enormous shedding of blood certainly carries echoes of Christ's Passion. At the same time, considering the imagery that combines physical attacks with extreme blood-shedding, we might argue that, metaphorically speaking, Cardoc is raped by the giants, and only Erec's courageous intervention rescues the miserable victim.³⁴ Although the protagonist does not know the reasons for the giants' brutal mistreatment of their enemy, he feels deep pity and knows that he has to get involved and rescue him (5429–34), thereby beginning, for the first time in his life, to act on behalf of his fellow men and to serve for the larger good, instead of thinking only about himself.³⁵ Pity, finally, is gaining solid ground in him.³⁶

Tragically, however, Erec exhausts himself so much, and loses such a quantity of blood himself that he falls off his horse and plunges into coma after he has killed the giants, rescued the knight, and then returned to his own wife. This leads to the next crucial scene in which Enite bitterly laments, just like Cadoc's lady had done before, her extraordinary sorrow. As interesting as it would be to analyze her rhetoric, her religious invocations, her psychological drama, and finally her determination to commit suicide, this would take us too far afield for our purposes. Instead, the focus must next switch to Count Oringles's attempts to win Enite as his wife, in which he quickly resorts to violence and demonstrates that the differences between him and a rapist knight such as Urjans in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* prove to be practically zero. In fact, Oringles picks up exactly there where the anonymous count had been forced to let go before, and sexual conquest continues to dominate this situation as well.³⁷

Significantly, there is an important parallel between Erec rushing to the spot where a lady is sitting in the forest, screaming out of profound pain and desperation after the seemingly certain loss of her husband, and then immediately offers his help, and Oringles who also arrives in the forest after having heard a woman's profound laments. He prevents her from committing suicide, but after having learned from Enite about Erec's tragic history, that is, his presumed death, the count immediately thinks about his own opportunity to win the most beautiful

³⁴ For a larger discussion of the meaning of the bleeding body, see Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, 2006. Surprisingly, however, despite her focus on Middle High German texts from the classical period (ca. 1170–1220), she does not pay any attention to this significant scene in Hartmann's *Erec*. As we will see in a subsequent chapter, there is a significant parallel to this bloody scene in Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*, and both times we observe a not too subtle allusion to rape of men.

³⁵ This has been observed often; see, for instance, Wapnewski, *Hartmann von Aue*, 1969, 50.

³⁶ Gephart, *Das Unbehagen*, 2005, 61–65; older literature on compassion there.

³⁷ The modeling of this scene on the basis of Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* seems quite likely, but Hartmann then quickly turns to the consequences for Enite, who will be exposed to a rape attempt. See Knapp, "Enites Totenklage," 1976, 87–89.

woman on the face of the earth as his wife, not caring at all about her desires, her suffering, her emotions, or her wishes. By contrast, Erec had not intended to rape the poor lady in the forest, although she was alone and without male protection, especially because of the deep love for his own wife. Instead, he offered his help and rescued Cardoc at the risk of his own life because he felt impelled to do so out of a deep sense of moral obligation.

Oringles turns to his companions, reminds them of his status as a bachelor, emphasizes Enite's noble appearance, and declares that she would be a perfect match for himself (6199–204). He does not ask Enite what her pleasure might be in this situation. He only views her as a beautiful object that he wants to possess, and he gets the full approval of his counselors who obviously prove to be entirely malleable tools in their lord's hands.³⁸

At first Oringles seems to treat Enite rather kindly, praising her for the grief that she is displaying over her husband's death, which actually reflects her high degree of loyalty (6227). But then he urges her to lay everything to rest and to return to life with all its joys: "doch habet irs nû genuoc getân" (6228; you have done enough now), a formula that is commonly heard in epics and romances strongly determined by mourning and laments, such as *Diu Clage*. But neither there nor in Hartmann's epic do these words achieve the desired effect, especially because the count quickly dismisses Erec as not truly worthy for Enite's excessive laments (6242–28), and then he emphasizes that life offers more than sorrow and sadness (6253–59). Finally, he positions himself as a most attractive alternative, particularly because he is not married and in need of a wife (6264–71). But Enite adamantly rejects all his words as irrelevant for her because she is completely dedicated to Erec and will never marry another man, unless, and this proves to be critical for our analysis, "ez geschæhe sunder mînen danc" (6297; it would happen against my will), clearly suggesting that she would only submit to violence, hence rape.³⁹

The contrastive positions are clearly marked, and Oringles should understand his own limits, but he disregards the deeper meaning of Enite's words, categorizes them as idle chatter, typical of all women, and simply proceeds to take actions, ordering the 'corpse' to be placed on a bier, while Enite is forced to accompany him to his castle. Although there is no specific reference to rape, every element in this situation supports our reading along those lines. The count is entirely focused

³⁸ For a broader examination of a ruler's counsel, see Sullivan, *Counsel*, 2001. Although he also considers *Erec*, he does not take this specific scene into consideration. We find a very similarly malleable counsel in *Mai und Beaflo* where the Greek Count Mai can easily influence and blackmail all nobles to allow his marrying the foreign princess Beaflo, although nothing is known about her social background and family. *Mai und Beaflo*, 2006, 2883–92.

³⁹ Gephart, *Das Unbehagen des Helden*, 65–68, emphasizes the suffering and the deep pity that Enite's behavior evokes in the audience, but she does not perceive the sexual nature of Oringle's approaches.

on Enite's bodily beauty, and although he engages in a brief discussion with her, he does not pay attention to the actual meaning of her words, disbelieving that women can be trusted or that they would actually truly speak their mind. Moreover, his sexual passion begins to overpower him to the disadvantage of all his rationality, and he even rejects any opinion that his vassals might voice who obviously object quite seriously to his quick decision to marry Enite: "swiez doch dûhte schande / alle sîne dienstman" (6331–32; although all his vassals considered it to be a shame). The reference to the time frame in which this hasty wedding is supposed to take place reveals even further what is truly on Oringles's mind who simply wants to sleep with Enite while having the flimsy legitimization through a marriage that he wants to impose on her against her express wishes.

To remove any doubt on his audience's mind, the commentator then underscores the exclusively sexual nature of the count's intention: "sô grôz ist der minne maht: / er wolde et briuten der naht" (6340–41; the power of love is so big: he [immediately] wanted to marry during that night). Similarly, he explicitly addresses the violence with which the count forces Enite to submit under his wishes, an act which we hence could certainly identify as rape, both in the author's mind and in ours: "swiez der vrouwen wære / widermüete und swære, / sie wart im sunder danc gegeben. / ez enhalf ouch niht ir widerstreben" (6346–49; however the lady felt opposed to it and was filled with grief, she was handed over to him against her wishes. There was no way to oppose it).

Interestingly, the conflictual situation reaches its culmination point not in the bedroom, but in the dinner hall where Oringles believes to have the right staging ground to prepare both of them for the subsequent sexual union. After all, it is here where he can call upon Enite to appear and to leave the bier where she has spent all the time grieving and to join him at his meal (6363–64).⁴⁰ However, Enite disregards both groups of messengers, the second even larger and consisting of lords, until Oringles appears himself. Yet she continues to resist his pleading to join him at the dinner table because she is determined to dedicate herself entirely to her mourning ritual. In a somber and formal response she insists on the inappropriateness of enjoying food now in face of her dead husband: "daz wære ein unwîplich maz" (6386; that would be an unwomanly behavior), identifying fasting as the only appropriate expression of her love for the deceased husband.

In a rather self-revealing fashion Oringles tries at first to characterize the dead knight as irrelevant, especially since he himself would be able to substitute for him easily (6391–92) in terms of his own body and his material goods (6394). Entirely misunderstanding Enite's profound pain over the loss of Erec, he demonstrates in full view of his court that for him marriage is a matter of physical prowess,

⁴⁰ There is no need to explore the close correlation between food and sexuality here; but see Gordon, "Culinary Comedy," 2004, 15–31; eadem, "Sausages," 2008, 503–16.

conquest, sexuality, and public representation, but not of love and spiritual bonding. Basically, he offers Enite such a high price that she should not be able to resist him: "ich wil geben in iuwer hant / mich unde mîn lant / und sô kreftigez guot / daz ir iuwer armuot / und leides müget vergezzen" (6406–10; I want to hand over to your hand myself and my country, and so much material goods that you can forget your poverty and sorrow).⁴¹ Subsequently, he demands again that she joins him at dinner: "noch gât dan mit mir ezzen" (6411; come with me to eat). To quote Susan L. Clark, "what Hartmann actually shows is the dehumanizing aspect that arises when either sex treats members of the other sex as expendable and interchangeable."⁴²

Enite leaves no room for any doubt about her own position, emphasizing that she is rather willing to be buried with dead Erec than to enter a new relationship with another man (6416–19). Sex, in other words, is the last thing on her mind, and yet this is the very thing that Oringles desires so much to get from her. Eating and sex combine for him, or the first simply represents a stepping stone to the latter, so he warns her ominously: "wan ichs benamen niht enbir" (6428; I won't tolerate anything else).⁴³ The situation grows even worse because she at first refuses to obey his command, but then he grabs her hand and drags her to the dining table where he does not allow her to sit down next to him, which would have been a sign of respect and love. On the contrary, she must take her seat exactly opposite of him, allegedly "daz er die vrouwen / deste baz möhte schwouwen" (6432–33; that he could look better at the lady). At a true wedding ceremony, she would sit at his side, whereas here he makes her an object of intense scrutiny and control, gazing at her intently, perhaps even aggressively, while urging her equally forcefully to eat which would finally be the long desired sign of her submission under his will: "er bat si dicke ezzen" (6434; he often urged her to eat). As Madeline H. Caviness observes regarding male gaze, reflecting upon Laura Mulvey's 1973 article: "it is normally the male spectator or voyeur who turns his objectifying and controlling gaze on the female . . ."⁴⁴ That is exactly the case in

⁴¹ See my discussion of Dietrich von der Gletze's verse narrative "Der belt," where the knight's bribery actually leads to a form of rape in metaphorical terms.

⁴² Clark, *Hartmann von Aue*, 79–80.

⁴³ Significantly, in *Mai und Beafloer*, like in other romances, fasting represents the only appropriate response to grief and, above all, to sexual violence, or the fear thereof. In the short time between the departure of Beafloer's father, the emperor of Rome, and his anticipated return when he will unfailingly demand sex from her, the young princess feels entirely forlorn and refuses to eat and drink, not knowing how to handle this horrifying situation. Only when her foster-parents Roboal and Benigna finally intervene and learn the truth of the entire situation, does this all change because they offer their help and facilitate her escape, but not before she has finally eaten and recovered her strength (1077–1366).

⁴⁴ Caviness, *Visualizing Women*, 2001, 49. At a later point, she specifies this even further regarding the violent nature of the gaze: "'the gaze' is inherently destructive to its object" (81); she qualifies

this situation as well, although Oringles's gaze only focuses on Enite's body and cannot penetrate her mind and heart because he does not understand anything of love.⁴⁵

However, Oringles's efforts do not yield the desired results because Enite's grief proves to be stronger than any possible masculine allure that he might exert. Instead of enjoying the meal, the 'widow' only thinks of her lost husband, cries so hard that she wets the entire table at her side, and wrings her hands, clearly evoking the image of the sorrowful Virgin Mary. All this begins to irritate the count exceedingly who warns her to control herself and to create a nice show for him and his guests, if she does not want to make herself look ridiculous: "und enwæret ir niht ein kint" (6451; if you do not desire to appear like a child). In a perhaps typical male fashion, the count angrily reprimands his 'bride' to maintain herself, and he expresses great irritation at her unwillingness to display delight and happiness at the prospect of marrying such a wealthy man as he claims to be.

Oringles, in his myopic and selfish perspective, cannot grasp why his victim does not appreciate the radical change of events for Enite, at least externally, considering, as he sees it, the profound improvement of her whole life, from being a lost individual, poor and lonely, to a powerful and rich bride to be (6471–79). More interestingly, he also emphasizes that she was driven by destiny to him and that he would deserve her appreciation and love for being so good to her (6480–81).

Indeed, Oringles regards himself as Enite's savior, and he expects to be treated like that, not understanding at all what her emotional condition looks like. For that reason he cannot help himself and finally bellows at her: "und lât iuwer tumbez klagen" (6491; stop your silly lamenting). Being enraged by her seeming foolishness, he utters the traditional patriarchal position that she should simply exchange one husband with another whenever she can get a better deal thereby (6497–501). Of course, if he were in her position, he would probably not even imagine the likelihood of him following that advice.

One more time he forbids her to lament any further her husband's death (6505), commands her to eat with him, but then he has to listen to an infuriating response by Enite, namely that he had wasted all his words and that she will never eat again unless her husband would rise from the dead, a typical pledge of absolute love which we know from a number of other medieval narratives such as those that focus on the theme of the 'eaten heart,' and those that discuss desperate love

this, however, by warning us that this might not be a timeless phenomenon. See also Miller, "How to See," 1993, 367–88; Sterba, "The Question," limits herself to Enite's role as proxy eye for her husband.

⁴⁵ For further reflections on the male gaze as the first stage leading to rape, see Sumi and Clüver, "Body," 2006, 194–218; *Schaulust*, 2005.

extending long beyond death, such as some stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.⁴⁶ Even the heroic epic, as represented by *The Song of the Cid*, for instance, contains this motif when Count Ramón of Barcelona, having been taken captive by the protagonist hero My Cid Don Rodrigo, refuses to share food and drink with his opponent for three days after which he finally breaks down and has to accept El Cid's conditions.⁴⁷

The reaction by the count in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* does not wait to come; he finds Enite's recalcitrance so repulsive and maddening that he immediately turns to brutal violence, hitting her directly in her face, the very point where her mouth has voiced her self-determining and opposition, but so also her love and dedication to her marriage. She is not willing to remarry, although that is the very point of Oringle's intention so that he could legally sleep with her. But all his attempts at creating a scenario seemingly resembling a wedding (communal dinner), ultimately fail, not to mention that the Church would have adamantly refused to accept the conditions created by him as constituting a valid marriage.⁴⁸

Remarkably, the narrator does not hold back and sharply criticizes this wrong behavior, casting it basically as criminal, brutal, and repulsive, ultimately characterizing it as "untugent" (6517; lack of virtue), catapulting this perpetrator outside of courtly society. In fact, our reading, or the opinion of the narrator, is not unique; instead, as the latter himself implies, everyone present regards this outcome of events as outrageous and reprehensible, although no one dares to speak up: "beide stille und überlût / sô dûhtez si alle gelîche, / arme unde rîche, / ein michel unvuoge" (6525–28; both silently and with words they all, whether poor or rich, regarded it as a major transgression). Some even reproach the count, whether explicitly or implicitly, for his extreme misbehavior (6529–34), but he does not really care about their comments and brushes them aside, insisting that he has absolute power over her as the 'new' husband. He explicitly identifies her now as his "wîbe" (6545; wife), although no official wedding has taken place; moreover, Enite has never agreed to anything, and not even a male family member has colluded with the count, handing this woman over to him as part of a marriage arrangement. There is no legal ground for Oringles's argument, even though the members of his court are silenced and do no longer dare to speak up because they naively and stupidly accept his erroneous claim: "si ist mîn und ich bin ir" (6546; she is mine and I am hers). The count's insistence that a husband can do with his wife as it pleases him ("ich entuo ir swaz mir gevalle;" 6548; I do with her as I like)

⁴⁶ See, for instance, the fifth tale of the fourth day in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, where Isabetta cries herself to death over the loss of her lover, whose skull she has buried in a flower pot. As to the 'eaten heart,' see Virgulti, "The Medieval Legend," 2002, 86–101.

⁴⁷ *The Song of the Cid*, 2009, stanzas 60–63, 73–77.

⁴⁸ See the comment by Scholz in his edition of Hartmann's *Erec*, 2004, 854.

seems to have overbearing authority, yet the outcome of the subsequent events speaks a very different language.

But let us pause for a moment to examine what has happened in reality. Oringles has simply taken property of Enite because he finds her both without any protection by another male and as most attractive. He rushes into some form of legal arrangement that is supposed to submit this strange yet fascinating woman under his absolute rule. Basically he wants to sleep with her, or, as we ought to say now, to rape her. This specific verb is justified for this situation, even though the narrator does not resort to this term, obviously trying to prevent such harsh criticism against a member of the highest echelon of the aristocratic class. But we also need to keep in mind how Enite responds to Oringles's beating. Believing that her beloved husband is dead, and that there is no rescue for her out of the present dilemma, she regards the brutal treatment as an opportunity to die like a martyr and thus to join deceased Erec. In fact, she leans into the range of his fists, screams louder than ever before, but also defies her oppressor most courageously, hurling at him the oath that she would rather die than ever to marry him (6571–75). These very words provoke him to hit her a second time, knowing too well that all his sexual desires have been thwarted.

Although he does not rape her in sexual terms, he translates all his sexual desire into physical violence, once again directly aiming at her mouth (6579). But the pain does not crush her determination, on the contrary, as we are actually wont to hear from early-medieval hagiographical accounts with their emphasis on martyrdom, such as the famous religious plays by Hrotsvita of Gandersheim.⁴⁹ In fact, this gruesome situation emerges as a most welcome opportunity for Enite to reunite with her beloved husband; instead of being raped.

The narrator interjects one more comment here and explains the surprising turn of events regarding Enite's joyful welcoming of her being beaten: "si wære gerner têt gewesen / tûsentstunt dan genesen: / und als si den slac emphie / (wan er von mannes krefte gie), / dô hete si gedingen unde trôst / si würde des lîbes belôst" (6558–63; she would have preferred a thousand times to be dead than to be well: and when she received the hit [which was done with a man's force] she was delighted and had comfort that she might lose her life). Her previous suicidal intentions come back to the fore, so she resorts to the only strategy left to her, speaking, because she knows only too well that her words enrage Oringles more than anything else—she has plenty of experience in this regard considering the time when her husband had become deeply infuriated with her when she

⁴⁹ Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain*, 2002, covers various aspects of suffering bodies in Hartmann's *Erec*, but surprisingly not this most fascinating scene that carries so many Biblical allusions, yet is also framed by the imagery of rape in sexual terms. For early-medieval accounts of martyrdom and sexual assault on women, see Schulenburg, *Forgetful*, 1998, especially 321, 406, 413–14, et passim. For Hrotsvita, now see Wailes, *Spirituality*, 2006.

disregarded his order to keep quiet. Now, as she fully understands, the more she would speak, the more he would hit her, so she hopes to die from this brutal beating (6564–66).

This does not mean in the narrow sense of the word that the count is raping her, but rape is not necessarily determined by the sexual component; on the contrary, rape is an extreme form of violence against another person, not at all always the genitals being the primary target. So, in general terms, by trying to beat her into pulp, Oringles actually rapes her most brutally, though not knowing that indirectly she desires to gain her own salvation through her death. In other words, Enite desires to be martyred by the count and welcomes his physical attack in complete contrast to what he expects or assumes because he understands nothing of her emotional condition.

But the next situation changes everything because Enite not only utters words to provoke Oringles to intensify his beating; she also screams out loudly and addresses her husband's corpse, not knowing that he is still alive and actually begins to notice her words—perhaps for the first time in their full meaning. As soon as he has completely woken up—and this again also in metaphorical terms—and realized the distress his wife is in, he jumps up quickly, grabs a sword, kills Enite's oppressor, and then slaughters everyone within reach. Full of delight she welcomes him like a person risen from the dead, and both then escape, though not without facing numerous other challenges. However, which scholarship has noted many times, now they both are talking to each other again and ultimately regain their love within marital bonds because they have learned to accept each other without ignoring their social obligations.

Ultimately, Erec rescues his wife from imminent rape, and both Enite's screaming and Oringles's hitting her clearly confirm this situation. There does not have to be sexual penetration in order to constitute the conditions legally prescribed for rape to have happened. The count had violently abducted Enite from the forest to his castle, he had forced her to sit down at the dinner table with him, then he tried to make her eat with him, and he also attempted to quiet her by means of physical violence, not very differently from Erec's approach to his wife in the first part of the romance. Both men believe in their absolute power over their wives, and hence both are convinced that they could simply kill Enite if she does not obey them completely. But while Erec withheld his beating for a long time, and only threatened to resort to violence, Oringles does not display much patience and quickly begins hitting Enite, perhaps because he knows that she is not even fully married to him. The dinner together might have constituted a kind of wedding, especially because of the presence of all friends and nobles whom the count had assembled in the middle of the night as witnesses. However, Enite even refused to eat with Oringles, and she insisted on her inalienable right to mourn Erec's death, which then resulted in Oringles's violent outburst. Significantly, he is the

first to be killed, which would have been the appropriate punishment for a rapist in courtly society.

Ultimately then, as we can conclude, Hartmann was not at all hesitant to introduce the topic of rape several times in his Arthurian romance, although he presented this crime behind the veil of abduction attempts, and failed efforts by the two counts to force Enite into marriage in utter disregard of her firm commitment to her marriage with Erec, dead or alive. The degree to which she is prone to be victimized by various men in her social context, including her own husband, makes us shudder today, but the narrative set-up in its original context obviously addressed all of courtly society, most explicitly warning male members about the devastating consequences of rape. Even though Hartmann does not go into any gory sexual details, Enite's suffering in physical and emotional terms leaves nothing to doubt about her victimization. But we must also keep in mind that Cardoc's experience at the hands of the giants visually resembles sexual rape as well; hence this romance truly explores the meaning of bodily transgression, sexual aggression, and individual suffering as catastrophic elements that the chimera of King Arthur's court can hardly hide behind the show of festivals, tournaments, and the illusion of chivalry.

As Hartmann powerfully brings to our attention, courtly society proved to be highly fragile and contingent on the education, culture, and idealism of its individual members. Many of those whom Erec and Enite encounter on their adventures, both before and after their wedding, reveal considerable character flaws, and any of the men who attack Erec in the forest would have happily and ruthlessly raped his wife. At any moment Enite could become a victim of sexual transgression when the male protection is no longer present. In other words, the narrator appeals to his male audience to live up to the general expectations that they serve as women's protectors, and this also in sexual terms. Then, however, the account of Enite's suffering also serves to warn the men at court to aspire for better courtly manners and to learn new communicative strategies by which rape might become a matter of the past.

Tragically, despite the ultimately positive outcome of Hartmann's romance, the many existential problems encountered by Enite and other women indicate unmistakably that there is an uncanny sense of instability and sexual danger lurking at every corner behind the screen of the fictional world. Rape proves to be, sadly to say, also a hallmark of the courtly world, the continuously present downside of the glamour and glory of King Arthur's company. Granted, Hartmann does not pick up this topic in his other major works, such as *Iwein* and

Der arme Heinrich, but in *Gregorius* he also addressed a closely correlated issue, incest, first involving brother and sister, then mother and son.⁵⁰

To conclude, we can firmly identify the general concern with sexual transgressions and sexual violence as one of the major themes in courtly literature. Knights do not only have to face life-threatening challenges in combat and wars; they also have to figure out for themselves where they stand vis-à-vis women, whether within marriage or outside, one of the crucial aspects underlying the rise of the topic of courtly love.⁵¹ As Hartmann and many of his contemporaries confirm through their courtly narratives, the gender relationships were far from being simple and idyllic. On the contrary, sexual perpetration seems to have been a significant problem affecting members of all social classes. Not even noble ladies were ever free of worries regarding the danger of rape.

If we think of the almost contemporary Spanish heroic epic *The Song of the Cid* (ca. 1250), where the two Carrión brothers get their revenge at the Campeador for having been exposed in their cowardice earlier in a situation when the lion had become loose by shamefully whipping their wives, El Cid's daughters, we gain a sense of the pervasive problem to which women were exposed in the high Middle Ages: "Both brothers attacked and whipped away, / Yelling, competing who could whip better, / Until the girls were barely conscious, and the Carrións tired. / They left them for dead on the forest floor."⁵² Again, this is not sexual rape in the narrow sense, but we are strongly reminded of the tragedy that Cardioc had to suffer from, and so we begin to realize how much, within the context of medieval heroic and courtly narratives, sexual violence has as much to do with social and physical transgression and finds poignant criticism. The outcome of the Carrións' beating carries not even so subtle sexual allusions: "They rode away with costly cloaks and furs, / Leaving their wives lying, half-naked, / For mountain birds and forest beasts to eat as they pleased. / They were sure the girls were dead" (189, stanza 129).

Of course, rape is not a sexual crime in the first place, despite the specific location on the victim's body where the crime is committed. Wherever we look, however, bodies are bleeding, and the narrators highlight the victims' suffering in most specific terms, charging the perpetrators for having committed a serious crime. But even when no blood is flowing, and no wounds indicate the extremity of violence done to the victim, seduction, recklessness, brutality, and violation determine many gender relationships, mostly affecting negatively the female protagonists, but at times also male characters. Considering the motifs behind the Carrións' action against their own wives, we clearly perceive how much Erec's

⁵⁰ Hallich, *Poetologisches*, 1995.

⁵¹ For further details with a strong historical base, see Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 1999.

⁵² *The Song of the Cid*, 187. For a critical edition, see *Poema de mio Cid*, 2008.

brutal treatment of his wife essentially proves to be tantamount to rape as well. But whereas he never attacks her physically, both counts respectively who encounter the couple try to impose their will on her and would have certainly raped Enite if she had not known how to protect herself against their evil strategies by means of rhetorical devices or if she would not have been defended at the last minute by her husband who suddenly resurfaces from his coma both physically and metaphorically.

In this sense, rape emerges as an intriguing benchmark characterizing the level of development within courtly society, specifically among the male members of that world. Hartmann can certainly be identified as a major spokesperson arguing against the pervasive sexual danger women commonly face, both at court and outside.⁵³ That his *Erec* also provides fundamental insights into social *mores*, i.e., normative behavior, does no longer require further mention.⁵⁴ The extent, however, to which the female character Enite contributes to this process through her involuntary suffering, especially from rape attempts, truly deserves very close attention and might constitute one of Hartmann's greatest literary accomplishments.

⁵³ See the contribution to *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature*, 2004.

⁵⁴ For a thorough discussion of this aspect, now see Haubrichs, "Die Narration," 432–33.

Chapter 2

The *Nibelungenlied* — a Male Poet Reveals His Fear of Women Violence, Rape, and Political Machinations in the Heroic World

It has been a commonplace in *Nibelungenlied* research to draw sharp demarcation lines between the world of the male heroes and the female participants who are quickly sidelined or are cast as monstrous, if not even devilish. Robert Scheuble provides a good example for this approach insofar as for him the epic poem clearly reflects upon women's commonly accepted position within medieval society, properly staying indoors and keeping to themselves, only gazing out of the windows and awaiting the male protagonists' moves. Women's social role can be described, so Scheuble, as passive and private, limited to textile work, and other household activities. They are obedient and servile and develop their identity through their male partners only. If they appear in public they assume only representative, ornamental functions and are expected to offer entertainment for the knights, either singing songs or telling stories, dancing, and playing a music instrument, sexually, however, inaccessible until marriage.¹

Undoubtedly, the *Nibelungenlied*—here I limit myself to the version preserved in ms. B, whereas the situation of women, especially of Kriemhild, appears to be quite different in ms. C, and elsewhere—offers numerous examples of men abusing women. However, the opposite also proves to be the case—women abusing men—because, especially when we consider the remarkable role played by Kriemhild, many of the events in this text are determined by violence that affects both genders. In fact, the entire epic might be defined as a literary forum for the exploration of violence, both on the private and the public level. The final battle between the Burgundians and their Hunnish, but then also other troops who are in the service of King Attila, is nothing shy of a most gruesome exploration of violence in its myriad facets from which virtually no one can escape. In this sense it would be erroneous to focus on women's destiny only, though the text offers

¹ Scheuble, *mannes manheit*, 106–08.

intriguing examples of how powerful (mostly male) strategies and machinations can come to the fore in the battle between the genders.²

There would be little doubt as to the male authorship of this poem, especially considering how the tragic destiny suffered by all female characters is evaluated by the narrator who harbors no qualms about presenting rather approvingly the way how the male protagonists treat the female counterparts, whether they belong to their own kin and family or not.³ Previous attempts, however, to detect matriarchal power structures against which male rulers fight with all their might, as interesting as they may be, don't need to be pursued here further.⁴ Certainly, the poet might reflect deep-seated fear on the part of men, and Gunther's triumph over the monstrous Brünhild might signal how much early-medieval society—if we consider the older sources of the *Nibelungenlied*—which was not yet concerned with 'courtly love,' might have been deeply determined by fear of the female gender. The epic as we know it today has come down to us in a number of manuscripts copied earliest around 1200, that is, clearly at a time when women had already gained tremendously in respect in public, courtly, life.⁵

Kriemhild's highly ambivalent, if not devious, role in the epic has rightly attracted much attention, whether we think of her long-term goal to achieve her revenge against Hagen, or whether we consider her victimization at the hands of her male relatives, and especially of Hagen.⁶ In particular, we need to keep in mind that she is the only one who pursues this revenge persistently and without ever giving up, whereas normally it would have been the task of her kin to do so.⁷ Again, as many scholars have observed, apart from the military conflicts that ultimately and tragically lead to an Armageddon, the *Nibelungenlied* offers significant insights into the tensions between men and women, almost as if the epic poem is trying to come to terms with the traditional gender conflict as the foundation of universal problems and to figure out where the demarcation lines have been or should be drawn. In fact, those aspects discussed by the poet in his epic work finds numerous reflections in related texts, especially in Nordic literature.⁸ At issue, then, would be the question who among them all can exert the most control, and whether the male characters are powerful enough to subjugate the female participants—certainly a significant motif underlying the male heroes'

² Tennant, "Prescriptions," 1999, 273–316.

³ Many scholars have probed the biographical question; see, for instance, Hansen, *Die Spur*, 1987; Mackensen, *Die Nibelungen*, 1984.

⁴ Classen, "The Defeat," 1992, 89–110. For a brief summary of the current scholarship with a feminist bent, see Nolte, "Feminist and Gender Studies," 2002, 198–200.

⁵ For recent insights into the manuscript tradition, see the contributions to *Die Nibelungen: Sage – Epos – Mythos*, 2003.

⁶ Jan-Dirk Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied*, 2005, 117–19.

⁷ Greenfield, "Frau, Tod und Trauer," 2000, 111–14.

⁸ Vestergaard, "Gudrun/Kriemhild," 1984, 63–78.

behavioral patterns that dominate many aspects in this heroic masterpiece.⁹ These are not easy to handle and set up a lot of resistance against, if not opposition to, male manipulations. At the end, however, Brünhild, above all, has lost all her influence and strength, and disappears from the narrative stage, if we disregard her cameo reappearance in the follow-up text *Diu Clage* at the very end when the news of the tragic outcome reaches Worms.¹⁰

Kriemhild has to suffer her husband Siegfried's murder, and subsequently experiences a long series of humiliations at the hand of Hagen and her own brothers, until she marries King Attila, first against her own judgment, then, however, with her approval because of secret hopes that he might help her to avenge her first husband's murder. But she is killed as well because, as Hildebrand says, she had raised her hand against a man, executing Hagen as her ultimate goal in life after the loss of Siegfried. Even her second husband, the Hunnish king, expresses how much he is deeply disturbed by her action because Hagen was not supposed to die, and Etzel would have accepted him even under the worst circumstances as a worthy opponent: "swie vîent ich im wære, ez ist mir leide genuoc" (2374, 4; how much I was his enemy, his death still deeply grieves me).¹¹ The only exception seems to be Helche, King Etzel's deceased wife, who is said to have wielded tremendous power, but she finds mention only on the sideline and from a historical perspective. Nevertheless, things look quite differently at Etzel's court, and this even in terms of gender relationships.

Strangely, there are no specific comments about the brutal treatment of Brünhild and her utter loss of power and influence, but the narrator demonstrates unmistakably his dominant interest in men's destiny, and expresses his abhorrence at the idea that a woman could play any, if not more than the men, political role in public. This does not come as a surprise considering the narrator's major concern, that is, his primary interest in male honor and male prowess, demonstrated both through their victorious struggle against enemies that had threatened them on the battle field, and through their absolute control of their women back home.¹²

Curiously, however, the anonymous poet offers many examples of how the male protagonists respond to the women at court and outside, regularly reflecting his clearly patriarchal world view. There is no doubt that women suffer from male violence, yet the poet's perspectives are of greatest importance for our further

⁹ Again, Scheuble, *mannes manheit*, 107–08; for a very sympathetic and comprehensive reading of the roles played by Kriemhild and Brünhild, see Mackensen, *Die Nibelungen*, 148–59.

¹⁰ See the introduction to *Diu Clage*, 1997, i–xlv. See also Jan-Dirk Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied*, 2009, 131–33.

¹¹ *Das Nibelungenlied*, 1988; all translations are my own. The extra spacing reflects the two-part structure of the heroic verse.

¹² Ehrismann, *Nibelungenlied*, 1987, 235–41; see also Starkey, "Brunhild's Smile," 2003, 159–73.

investigations insofar as he consistently reveals his bias. There is no doubt concerning his mostly hateful, or at least derogatory, attitude toward women, and in this regard he opens a window toward the wider issue of violence and the gender discourse, although from a negative point of view.

We can discriminate between 'discursive violence' and physical violence, and yet each form of violence is also coupled with a solid dose of insecurity, fear, and a lack of self-consciousness.¹³ The *Nibelungenlied* offers itself so well for an initial investigation concerning the public treatment of violence (and rape) in medieval German literature because the author displays an explicit masculine attitude and does not harbor any noteworthy sympathy for women, as demonstrated by his clear expression of relief when Gunther, with the help of Siegfried, has defeated Brünhild, and when Kriemhild, as a punishment for her killing of Hagen, is immediately put to death by Hildebrand. The male world, as reflected in this heroic epic, does not want female protagonists to exert any control and to undermine men's absolute dominance.¹⁴ Could we, however, accept the position that women here are entirely reduced to the level of female servants offering only sexual satisfaction and fulfill no other purpose but to function as necessary figures in the background of male performances?¹⁵

The poet introduces Kriemhild above all in the first few stanzas, before he mentions her three brothers, though we quickly learn that they are in charge of her as the male representatives of the family, and that they also exert supreme public authority: "Ir pflâgen drîe kûnege edel unde rîch" (4, 1; three noble and powerful kings took care of her). Kriemhild's mother, Uote, is still alive, but she has lost her husband and does not govern by herself, having conceded the power to her three sons. The critical issue raised here does not concern the political structure, but Kriemhild's future role as the wife of a hero, though in a dream she has foreseen tragedy and would like to abstain from the marriage strategy in order to avoid pain and sorrow (15, 3). As the narrator comments, however, this is not written into her stars, and instead tragedy will strike many people because of the murder of her husband, slain by her own relatives, or brothers (19, 3).

Let us differentiate the approach. Does the poet harbor particularly negative feelings about women, as expressed by these initial stanzas? Not necessarily, whereas the opposite almost might be the case because the murder of the in-law is identified as the *cause célèbre* for the massive slaughter of men (19, 4). Basically, then, the narrator has identified a number of key components that determine human fate, human community, and human life: erotic relationships, political

¹³ Scheuble, *mannes manheit*, 108–16.

¹⁴ For a somewhat extreme, yet still interesting, position within this context, see Frakes, *Brides and Doom*, 1994.

¹⁵ Scheuble, *mannes manheit*, 107.

power, envy, and fear. No wonder, we might say, that the victimization of women soon to happen will decide the development of the devastating events, first in Worms within the territory of the Burgundians, then in Gran at King Attila's (Etzel's) court in Hungary.

In fact, we face a curious situation at the Burgundian court insofar as the old queen is still among the living and could have easily continued with the government of her country, but her three sons seem to have taken over entirely and now determine even the destiny of their sister.¹⁶ But before we pursue the history of Kriemhild further, let us first turn to Brünhild, who has often been studied in her role as the mighty Icelandic queen, and as the subordinated wife of King Gunther in Worms. None of the men who accompany the latter on his bridal quest would have a chance against this mighty woman, whether they can retain their weapons or not. She has set up a competition for any wooer, and only if the latter would be able to outdo her would she accept his wooing and become his wife. This rumor has even spread to the Rhine, particularly because of the grotesque nature of the conditions to win her hand (327).

Gunther, in a grotesque and pompous display of male arrogance, is immediately ready to risk his life in return for winning this extraordinary prize (329), but Siegfried, apparently the strongest man in the world who is even able to rely on additional strength drawn from his magical cape, warns Gunther not to pursue this goal and to abstain from his idea to woo this horrendous heroic woman who would be much too dangerous for him (330).

Ultimately, however, Hagen, apparently Siegfried's arch-enemy, whether out of fear, envy, or insecurity, prods Gunther to ask Siegfried to assist him in this enterprise and to come along on this bridal quest (331). Siegfried does not hesitate for long, but he sets a condition, Kriemhild's hand as his wife, to which Gunther agrees (334). Basically then, these men negotiate among themselves and utilize the women as objects for their personal gains, entirely disregarding any emotions and treating love and individuality as negligible factors.¹⁷

Siegfried, resorting to his magic cape, manages to provide Gunther with enough support to win over Brünhild in all three competitions, which then forces her to live up to her own promise and to accept the king's wooing, although a nagging feeling of disbelief continues to vex her. This then leads to the famous bedroom scene back in Worms where Gunther hopes to sleep with his new bride after they have married publicly with great festivities. Here things suddenly look very different because the king no longer can fall back on Siegfried's magical powers

¹⁶ Schwarzmaier and Herrbach-Schmidt, "Die Frau als Mittelpunkt," 2003, 98–102, offer a somewhat popularizing overview of women's political influence at the medieval court.

¹⁷ Frakes, *Brides and Doom*, 1994.

and is now, in all his nakedness, miserably exposed to Brünhild's superior physical strength.

The poet grants us, almost in a voyeuristic manner, to gaze directly into the bedroom where Gunther darkens the room and then lies down next to his new wife, trying to embrace her and to begin the game of love. Whether he harbors any feelings for her, or whether he simply wants to take what he believes belongs to him in terms of sexual satisfaction, we cannot tell. At this point Brünhild defies him and refuses to let him have his will, not because she is opposed to sexuality or is afraid of losing her virginity. Apart from the fact that there is no feeling of love in this monstrous woman, her argument is political: "unz ich diu mæ'r ervinde" (635, 4; until I will have found out the truth). We immediately understand what she means, although her language is rather cryptic. Nothing seems to be right in all the marriage arrangements, which she has clearly perceived, without grasping the full degree of male machinations. In particular, she does not understand why Gunther would have given his sister as wife to a vassal, Siegfried, and she does not receive any convincing answer. Her problems here are, of course, basically the same as those back home when she was cheated by the Burgundian king who won the competition against her only with Siegfried's help hiding under the magical cap making him invisible. But in the private space of the marital bed, all pretenses are of no use any more, and Brünhild's test immediately proves her suspicion to be true, especially because she succeeds, single-handedly, to tie his arms and feet with one belt only, to the utter embarrassment of her fresh husband.

Moreover, she hangs this ridiculous bundle on a nail, reifying her new husband to the utmost. Although he begs her to free him, for which he would pledge never to bother her again, she ignores his pleading and goes to sleep. Perhaps the term "gebende" (638, 2; fetter), which is normally used for the head-gear worn by married women, might reveal how much the gender roles have been reversed here. His attempt to exert violence against this mighty queen and to subjugate her under his will now turns against him, and he would suffer the worst humiliation a married man ever experienced if she did not release him from the nail early in the morning because he promises to leave her alone from then on (641, 4). But Siegfried is still available for help, and as Gunther's confidante he soon learns of the terrible defeat suffered by the Burgundian king. Without any hesitation he immediately pledges to help Gunther and to crush Brünhild's defiance with all his own might. He knows that he can arrive in the bedroom invisible under his magic cloak (653, 1), and that in this shape he can deceive the Icelandic queen a second time. Whereas before Siegfried had done nothing but to out-perform Brünhild in the competition, now he intends to attack her physically and to destroy all her physical resistance, forcing her to submit under Gunther and to accept her role as an obedient wife: "sô twinge ich dir din wîp" (654, 3; I will force your wife).

Gunther agrees, and only requests that Siegfried does not deflower her, or get involved with her sexually in any way (655, 1). Even if his friend might have to kill Brünhild, he would not mind because he considers her a devil in female form (655, 4). So both men plot to force the monstrous woman to accept her destiny within a men's world, but the subsequent battle quickly demonstrates that even Siegfried is not quite up to par for this task. Although he wears the magic cloak which grants him the additional strength of twelve men, the ensuing battle with Brünhild does not develop well for him. First she grabs his arms, trying to tie them with her belt like she had done in the previous night with Gunther (671). She drags him over to the wall and pushes him in the narrow space between the wall and a chest. Amazingly, for the first time in his life, Siegfried seems to be helpless: "Waz half sîn grôziu sterke unt ouch sîn michel kraft?" (672, 1; What good was his great strength, and his enormous power?). Physically, the young hero in fact appears to be inferior to this monster woman, yet the poet does not allow this heroine to triumph. Siegfried quickly reflects upon the shame and embarrassment that all men would have to suffer henceforth if he were to fail in this situation, which provides him with enough strength to fight back successfully.

Indeed, the battle between these two extraordinary people emerges as highly symbolic and representative of the fundamental gender relationship because Brünhild's victory would have implied, at least in the man's thinking, that no woman would ever accept any other authority than her own. The text is very clear about it: "sô mugen elliu wîp / her nâch immer mêre tragen gelüpfen muot / gegen ir manne" (673, 2-4; henceforth all women will be disrespectful against their husbands). Moreover, the conflict with Brünhild also represents a decisive turning point for both genders insofar as up to that moment women have not behaved like Brünhild, and have not even considered rising up against patriarchal control: "diu ez sus nimmer getuot" (673, 4; who has never acted that way before). Since the text does not offer any critical discussion in the context of this passage, and since the male protagonists resort to such generalizing language, we can assume that the poet reveals his fundamental worries about women's potential liberation, if not emancipation, from patriarchal rule, if we may use such anachronistic language here.¹⁸ Whereas previous scholarship has tended to read the entire scene in ironic terms, this does no longer seem reasonable, especially considering the countless examples of violence and rape that we encounter in medieval literature at large and that are being discussed in the present book. Otfried Ehrismann argues, for instance:

¹⁸ Wailes's argument in "Bedroom Comedy," 1971, 365-76, that the entire scene has to be read ironically seems doubtful, and certainly reflects traditional male perspectives.

The narrator on the other hand laces the whole scene with signals of irony, comparing this struggle to the death with erotic play. The audience is asked to live with this splitted irony since this — and not the barbaric scene as such — provides the intellectual pleasure. The narrator softens the rape scene for the sake of his audience — not for the sake of the plot as such, by using narrative techniques. He does this not only by means of irony and the intellectual pleasure it causes, but also by using the scenery of farce, which he quotes and which was most certainly known to his listeners, and finally by introducing an opportunity for the audience to take pity on the humiliated woman.¹⁹

Only in global terms could we agree with this approach, since the physical battle between man and woman in the bedroom belongs to an ancient topos, here enhanced through the fact that Siegfried fights only as Gunther's proxy, and yet at the same time is deeply concerned about the status of all men in the entire world. Irony seems to determine this scene because of Brünhild's monstrous appearance and the disproportional relationship. In fact, the image of Siegfried being stuck in the opening between the chest and the wall, failing to resist this mighty queen who clinches him beyond all measure, seriously, yet also ridiculously threatening him in his masculinity, can evoke laughter. However this would be only an ambivalent response because the farcical episode carries highly political significance and sheds light on the poet's and his audience's attitude toward certain female behavior which does not conform to patriarchal expectations.

Gunther reveals a deep concern about the development of this struggle because it will have dire consequences for himself and his entire country. The text indicates how much the king worries: "er angeste umb den man" (674, 1; he worried for the man), that is, he is afraid that Brünhild in fact might win and embarrass both Siegfried and hence all men. Similarly, Siegfried feels deeply ashamed (674, 2), yet also great wrath, which fills him with new strength that eventually allows him to overcome her resistance. At first, however, she squeezes his hands so hard that the blood spurts out of his fingernails (675, 2–3), a clear mark of his vulnerability, despite his otherwise impenetrable skin. Finally, however, he can turn the table and overcomes her extraordinary strength, throwing her on the bed, pushing her down so hard that she screams for pain (676, 3–4). Although she still tries to pull out the belt from her side to fetter Siegfried's hands, he is now fully in control, blocking all her movements and hurting her so much that her body seems to break apart (677, 3). Ominously, the narrator then comments: "des wart der strît gescheiden: dó wart si Guntheres wîp" (674; thus the struggle came to an end; then she became Gunther's wife).

Did Siegfried only defeat Brünhild, or did he then also commit rape? The text remains highly ambivalent and only informs us how submissive the queen

¹⁹ Ehrismann, "Disapproval," 1992, 172.

suddenly has become who now pledges not to resist him as her husband any longer—assuming that the man she had fought with was Gunther. She goes so far as to identify him as “vrouwen meister” (678, 4; master of women). Next follows the actual sexual union with the king, as Brünhild must assume, because Siegfried gets up from the bed, seemingly to take off his clothes (679, 2), but in reality to make room for Gunther to substitute for him, of course. Nevertheless, Siegfried secretly removes a ring from Brünhild’s finger and also her belt (679, 3; 680, 1–2), which later will serve Kriemhild to accuse her brother’s wife of having been nothing but a concubine, or prostitute, since Siegfried had had carnal knowledge of her first, before her own husband. At first she insults her in public by calling her a “kebse” (839, 4; whore), then by claiming that Siegfried was the man who took her virginity: “. . . ‘den dīnen schœnen lîp / den minnet’ êrste Sîfrit, der mîn vil lieber man. / jane was ez niht mîn bruoder, der dir den magetuom an gewan” (840, 2–4; Siegfried was the first to make love with you [with your beautiful body], that is, my very beloved man. Indeed, it was not my brother who deflowered you). Moreover, she reveals that the two men had played an evil trick on Brünhild: “ez was ein arger list” (841; it was an evil trick), and she wonders aloud why Brünhild had slept with Siegfried since he was, according to her assumption, only her husband’s vassal (841, 2). Soon enough, these two women are involved in a bitter fight over their public honor, especially since Brünhild feels deeply hurt by these accusations. In her mind, however, Siegfried’s death penalty is already decided if Kriemhild’s claim would be verified (845, 4), and she can only hope that in the open confrontation with the other woman the accusation can be rejected and her honor restored.

Tragically, in this situation Kriemhild produces the ring and even the belt that Siegfried had taken from Brünhild in that fateful night: “. . . daz brâhte mir mîn vriedel, do er êrste bî iu lac” (847, 3; my beloved brought it to me after he had slept with you). Brünhild desperately clings to the last straw of hope when she argues that the ring had been stolen from her a long time ago (848), but then she is even faced by the belt that Kriemhild wears on her own body, which ultimately confirms that Siegfried indeed had slept with Brünhild: “. . . jâ wart mîn Sîfrit dîn man” (849, 4; indeed; my Siegfried had become your man).

The subsequent development amounts to not much more than the rather desperate attempt to cover up the secret of their transgressive behavior as much as possible, so when Brünhild first calls upon Gunther to defend her against Kriemhild’s ‘mockery’ (851, 3). She repeats her claim that both ring and belt had been stolen by someone, hence could not serve as proof of herself having slept with Siegfried first. Brünhild explicitly demands from Gunther to clear her from this calumny that amounts to unheard-of shameful and dishonor: “der vil grôzen schande” (854, 4; of this great shame). Gunther quickly resorts to a deceptive strategy, declaring that he would certainly investigate whether Siegfried

had indeed claimed publicly to have slept with Brünhild. In a clever maneuver, the king eschews to investigate the publicly voiced charge that Siegfried had deflowered his wife; instead he only declares his willingness to look into the claim whether his brother-in-law had boasted to have done so. Once Siegfried has arrived and inquired about the cause of the public dismay, he summarizes the case briefly: “du habes dich des gerüemet, daz du ir schœnen lîp / allererst habes geminnet, daz sagt Kriemhilt dîn wîp” (857, 3–4; that you boasted to have made love with her as the first man, as my wife Kriemhild claims).

Siegfried immediately responds to this charge exactly in the way how Gunther had expected he would because he picks up the very same words and addresses the narrow point of whether he had boasted about this sexual union with Brünhild in public or not, as if he as the brother-in-law would be beyond all reprove and could not be expected the least to have committed such a crime. He then goes one step further by announcing that he would make Kriemhild feel sorry for having dared to spread such a rumor (858, 2). He would even swear an oath “... daz ichs ir niht gesaget hân” (858; 4; that I did not tell her so). But as soon as the men at court have formed a circle in which Siegfried then would utter his oath, Gunther changes his mind and announces that he has more than enough confidence in Siegfried so that an oath concerning his innocence in this matter—most amorphously formulated as “aller valschen dinge” (859, 3; of all wrongful matters)—would not be necessary after all (860, 3), putting all blame on his own sister Kriemhild, as if she had simply bragged about her husband’s virility and strength as justification for her own claims of Siegfried’s political superiority.

Siegfried does not swear an oath regarding his alleged boasting, and he never swears an oath regarding the implied claim that he had deflowered Brünhild. And there is no explanation how Kriemhild got possession of the significant ring and belt, nor why she would have blamed Brünhild for having slept with Siegfried at first, before Gunther, her new husband. These two men cooperate exceedingly well, utilizing a rhetorical maneuver that deflects the possibly scandalous danger of revealing the truth of Siegfried’s actual relationship with his sister-in-law. Instead of investigating further what Kriemhild’s charge against Brünhild’s actual status within the courtly world might be—whore or queen, which might not necessarily be a contrast in this context—Siegfried only announces that he would punish Kriemhild severely for having spoken up foolishly and also arrogantly: “üppeclîche sprüche” (862, 2; haughty/disrespectful statements). He also recommends Gunther to do the same with his wife, which then would bring an end to women’s disruptive behavior: “ir grôzen ungefüege” (862, 4; their excessively bad performance).

Jan-Dirk Müller identifies this attitude against women within the context of heroic epics as a ‘stereotype’ about the “angstbesetzt phantasierte, überlegene

Frau" (the woman, in fantasy associated with imagined fear).²⁰ Women need to be educated, tamed, domesticated, and controlled by men; otherwise society would experience profound disruptions and shame (862, 4). But ironically, the entire conflict between the women only serves to aim for Siegfried's death. As soon as Hagen has learned of Brünhild's deep frustration and embarrassment, he immediately seizes the opportunity to justify the killing of his arch-enemy against whom he had never dared to stand up so far. Knowing, however, that Siegfried has indirectly dishonored Brünhild, that the entire relationship between Gunther, Siegfried, and Brünhild has been thrown into highly dubious light, legitimizes him to ask for the king's and his brother's support to initiate his murderous maneuver against the ominous and dangerous outsider. In fact, as the narrative development quickly illustrates, the conflict between the two women was only of secondary importance, though their destiny turns into a tragedy. In the case of Brünhild this had happened already long ago when Gunther had arrived in Iceland trying to woo her. It had continued immediately after the wedding, with Siegfried squashing her ability to maintain physical dominance, and continued until the time when the two queens fight against each other. Kriemhild's destiny takes a different course, but she is also the victim of numerous male machinations. I will return to her case shortly, but let us revisit one more time the question whether Siegfried had raped Brünhild.

In Kriemhild's words, her husband had indeed slept with Brünhild first, though he only crushed her resistance and had silently taken away her ring and belt. The possession of these symbolic objects provides sufficient proof, both for the two women and the public, to sustain the charge. Despite Gunther's and Siegfried's best attempts to silence their wives and to make the whole affair go away, they fully understand the dangerous implications. If Siegfried indeed had committed this crime, Gunther would be forced to stand up against him and to defend his honor, which he cannot do, at least not in a legitimate and honorable fashion.

We know that Hagen realizes this goal of eliminating this dangerous outsider figure ultimately through treason and a highly complex operation which involves the entire court, although only few of them are informed about the secret plans.

As Charles Nelson perceptively observes, "it is Siegfried who walks triumphantly away with the symbols of her [Brünhild's] virginity, her belt and ring. I have not located any medieval definition of rape which would consider a woman's husband as her rapist, but the actions of Siegfried cloud the picture, certainly for our modern eyes."²¹ The text, however, specifically points toward the fact that Siegfried had raped Brünhild because Kriemhild says so and can prove it by way of the symbolic objects. Indeed, they speak the truth, though differently

²⁰ Jan-Dirk Müller, *Spielregeln*, 1998, 193.

²¹ Nelson, "Virginity (De)Valued," 1992, 124.

than Brünhild assumes who suffers deeply from this insult. It does not matter whether Siegfried had actually penetrated Gunther's wife sexually in the second wedding night, whereas his symbolic behavior, squashing all her resistance, almost killing her in the struggle, and taking the two objects, thus preparing her for Gunther, amounts to a form of rape by the proxy Siegfried, which then led to, I would suspect, marital rape by Gunther. Siegfried had delivered what he had promised: "ich schaffe daz si hînaht sô nâhen bî dir gelîf, / daz si dich ir minne gesûmet nimmer mêr" (651, 2–3; I will manage it that she from then on will lie so closely to you that she will no longer withhold her love from you). The weak verb "gesûmen" does not necessarily imply 'force,' 'violence,' or 'rape,' but it carries the meaning of 'letting someone wait,' 'to hold off,' and 'to prevent,' hence of blocking someone from realizing his/her desire or intentions.²² Both men assume, in other words, that Gunther is legally entitled to having sex with Brünhild, which seems quite natural within the context of feudal marriage practices.

However, as we know from the actual situation in the first wedding night, Brünhild sees it quite differently and has no interest in her husband whom she obviously suspects of having cheated his way into marriage with her. She did not fight against sexuality per se, or against marriage, as we might suspect, considering the possible analogy to Kriemhild's youthful announcement at the beginning of the epic to her mother Uote that she would prefer never to experience a man's love because, as she has learned from her own dream and from her mother's instruction, erotic love always also leads to sorrow (15, 1–4).

By contrast, Brünhild would be a willing marriage partner if she only could find out the secret of her husband's true relationship with Siegfried, a man who had introduced himself as Gunther's vassal and yet is treated as an equal to him in all public encounters. After all, Siegfried has married Gunther's own sister, which Brünhild finds most puzzling, and rightly so. Not surprisingly, she has good reasons to assume that the entire social structure at the court in Worms is based on some secret agreements among the men that cannot be revealed. Consequently she is not willing to grant her husband the pleasure of sex, and does not want to forgo her virginity to him until this secret is lifted (635, 3–4). But Gunther's honor, hence his identity as king of the Burgundians, has by now become dependent on keeping this secret of how he and Siegfried cheated in the athletic competitions, which explains the enormous predicament of his marriage. Therefore Siegfried must take Gunther's place a second time, and now he has to complete the male battle against the monstrous woman, meaning that he is ultimately raping her, whether in sexual or in physical-political terms. Afterwards Brünhild will never

²² Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*. Vol. 1, 1974, 936. In a legal context 'gesûmen' might also imply 'to cause damage' and 'to hurt someone,' Ohly and Schmitt, *Wörterbuch der Mittelhochdeutschen Urkundensprache*, 1994, 686.

be able to claim her own power position again, and she can only rely on public speeches, her tears, and her role as Gunther's wife in order to achieve her goal to defend her own honor.

Let us not forget what Siegfried did with the two symbolic objects that he had taken from Brünhild, foolishly (?) handing them over to his own wife. Since she knows of their origin, Siegfried must have revealed to Kriemhild where they had come from and how he had acquired them. Although she might have misunderstood the allegorical imagery of ring and belt on one level, she knows only too well what they mean on a symbolic level and hence presents them publicly as the ultimate evidence to support the claim against her female competitor. Was Siegfried really so foolish as to believe that his wife would not have realized what he did in Gunther's bedroom and what the two objects that he handed over to her ultimately mean? The narrator simply claims ignorance in this case: "ine weiz, ob er daz tæte durch sînen hôhen muot" (680, 2; I do not know whether he did this because of his courtly manners). But he knows about the outcome, and alerts us to the catastrophic consequences for himself: "daz wart im sider leit" (680, 3; he had to pay for it later; or: he regretted it later). The sarcastic irony, however, cannot be more manifest because of the term "hôher muot" (nom. sing.), which carries many different meanings, all somehow circumscribing the fundamental courtly values of education, self-discipline, good manners, joy, love, etc.

Certainly, presenting such beautiful and valuable gifts to one's wife would confirm Siegfried's courtliness, but he had stolen these gifts from another woman whom he has left to his friend, the royal husband, as a rape victim, as the text explicitly indicates once Gunther has been able to sleep with her: "von sîner heimliche si wart ein lützel bleich. / hey waz ir von der minne ir grôzen krefte entweich!" (681, 3-4; because of his private love she turned somewhat pale. Oh, because of this love her great strength disappeared). The same words appear in her speech right after Siegfried had almost killed her, and when she begged him to let her live: "ich gewer mich nimmer mêre der edelen minne dîn" (678, 3; I will never again fight against your noble love). But this very term "minne" represents, at least in this context, nothing but physical subjugation, though she resorts to the word in order to appease her opponent. The poet's sarcasm could not be more brutal, especially because he does not even make any real attempt to hide the fact that Siegfried had squashed, suppressed, defeated, and in this sense also raped Brünhild.

But did the poet expect to meet full approval by his audience? Did he describe a situation common for them all; hence as one they all could or would identify with? One short line reveals that this could not have been fully the case, apart from the fact that the overall narrative development is contingent on Hagen's criminal strategy to eliminate Siegfried as punishment for his violent treatment of Brünhild.

There is no explanation of Hagen's specific motivation to proceed that way. He only observes his queen in tears and learns from her what the "mære" had been (864, 2).

Apart from referring to a literary genre in the late Middle Ages,²³ "mære" could have many meanings, such as 'news,' 'account,' 'astonishing event,' or 'novelty.' Here Brünhild obviously refers to the entire situation with Kriemhild's despicable behavior toward her, but she also implicates, whether deliberately or not, Siegfried as the one who had handed over the belt and the ring to his wife. What does Brünhild really know at this point? Does she finally suspect that Siegfried had been the one who had won the athletic competition back in Iceland, and also the one who had crushed her resistance in Gunther's bedroom? The text remains silent, and we can only speculate that her hunch must have gained in strength because she knows for sure that Siegfried had passed her own belt and ring to his wife. She never charges him with having been a thief, hence the only option for her remains that it had been he in the marital bed the second night, and not Gunther. After all, how could her husband have suddenly gained so much more strength after his miserable performance in the first wedding night? At any rate—and we should not try to read too much into this medieval heroic epic from a modern, psychologically determined perspective—Brünhild demands revenge; hence her tears, and Hagen understands fully that this represents his one opportunity at last. Instead of pledging to Brünhild to avenge her against Kriemhild, the one who had truly insulted her in public, he turns the entire situation around and targets Siegfried as the one responsible for the devastating development at Gunther's court.

However, Hagen does not serve at all as a defender of women's injured honor. He is not a ladies' champion or a courtier, as we find them regularly in courtly romances, such as Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* or *Iwein*. Instead, he proves to be a simple pragmatist who utilizes this situation to his own advantage to get rid of his old rival, and now more or less with the official approval by Gunther and his brothers, despite some initial resistance on their part (865–71). Not surprisingly, when Kriemhild, after Siegfried's murder, begins to plot against Hagen, he takes every necessary measure to fight against her and to take away all her resources to protect himself. However, Kriemhild does everything to preserve the old feudal order and her family, even to her own disadvantage. Her father-in-law and his men would have been ready to fight against Gunther and his brothers if Kriemhild had not intervened and prevented them from proceeding in that direction because she fears their defeat in face of the overwhelming strength of the Burgundians (1030). Although she knows the names of the murderers—" . . . 'Gunther und Hagene, jâ habt ir iz getân'" (1046, 3; Gunther and Hagen, you have done it)—she

²³ *Erotic Tales of Medieval Germany*, 2009, vii–ix. For the relevant scholarship, see 183–87.

does not allow Siegfried's men to resort to their weapons (1046, 4–1047, 1). And when the time has come for Siegfried's old father to return home, along with his daughter-in-law, she stays behind with her own family, knowing only too well, or at least being sufficiently coaxed by her brothers and her mother, how much the larger family in its dynastic connotations provides the only safe haven for her as a widow (1077–83). The text does not offer convincing explanation for her decision, especially since King Siegmund pledges her supreme power in his kingdom (1086) and also reminds her of her own child back home (1087), whereas she would have to live with relatives among whom she faces her worst enemies, as she knows only too well (1088).

When Kriemhild receives her dowry, the treasure that Siegfried had conquered from the dwarfs, she is exceedingly empowered and begins to hand out gifts to everyone. One of these objects, magical in nature, could have quickly allowed her to achieve the goal of avenging her grief, a special staff out of gold. This staff could have granted her, if she had known of its properties, power over the whole world (1124, 1–2), but the narrator only mentions this motif and drops it again without pursuing it at all. He needs to have Kriemhild fail in her attempts to get Hagen killed so early; first all other Burgundians have to die to complete the tragic cycle of violence. But at this moment, with all the treasures at her disposal, she begins to hand out extraordinary amounts of gifts and assembles, so to speak, an army of loyal men around her, which worries Hagen exceedingly, whereas Gunther would like to let the case rest because he feels guilty (as he is) and is simply content with having achieved a good arrangement with his sister (1129). He even admits to Hagen that he has pledged to Kriemhild “daz ich ir getæte nimmer mêre leit” (1131, 2; that I would never cause her grief), shockingly confessing his guilt in the past. Moreover, Hagen unabashedly announces that he would have no problems with committing the next ‘criminal’ act against the widow: “‘. . . lat mich den schuldigen sîn’” (1131, 4; let me be the guilty one), and they all acquiesce, despite some pathetic complaints by Gunther's brothers. But these complaints reveal once more how much the male protagonists are fully aware of their own guilt and only try to keep a low profile without exposing themselves too much. Giselher, for instance, comments: “‘. . . ‘Hagen hât getân / vil leides mîner swester; ich sold’ iz understân” (1133, 2–3; Hagen has caused much grief for my sister; I should have prevented it). Among themselves, however, they openly talk about their collective guilt, and they don't care about the actual consequences, as long as these do not affect them extraordinarily. Moreover, these comments are made, as it seems, in the immediate presence of Kriemhild, since the following verses relate that after Giselher's speech, in which he also expresses his determination to attack Hagen except that he belongs to their kinship (1133, 3), Kriemhild begins to cry once again: “iteniuwez weinen tet dô Sîfrides wîp” (1133, 4).

Tragically, and incredulously, Kriemhild is abused and deeply hurt a second time, once more, now in full knowledge of the secret dealings by the entire male company, involving Gunther, his brothers, and Hagen. This time it is Gernot who comes up with the idea to dump all the treasures into the Rhine, although he himself had voiced his anger about Hagen's move to take away the key to the treasures and to determine himself what to do with it (1132, 4). Kriemhild sheds tears once again, but she does not achieve the same affect with them as had been the case with Brünhild after her deep insult by Kriemhild because the male protagonists decide on their own actions only in consideration of what behooves them the best.

Gernot fully understands the dangers resulting from the enormous hoard, and he suggests to dump it altogether in the Rhine (1134). When Kriemhild complains about this to her younger brother Giselher, she finds in him only a duplicitous defender despite all his previous promises and pledges. He emphasizes that he would assist her exactly according to his own previous pledges, but that she would have to wait a while. And Hagen uses exactly that short moment in which Kriemhild is without any male protection to take the treasure into his own hands and to make it disappear in the water of the river (1137).

To provide Hagen with the necessary cover, Kriemhild's brothers go on a hunt—see the significant parallel to the preparatory scene in which Siegfried had hoped to defeat the enemy—and only after their return they officially learn about the massive operation to remove the treasure. Certainly, publicly they lament how much Hagen has abused their sister: “er hât ubele getân” (1139, 1; he has done badly), and officially voice their anger, but as soon as Hagen has left them for a while and then has returned, all previous problems have disappeared and he can move around scot-free despite the most serious charge against him of being a murderer. It is, after all, clearly a patriarchal society in which women's victimization does not fully matter, and so also their rape under special circumstances. The poet, on the other hand, almost naively deals with the various types of crimes against women without admitting himself how much they are abused by the leading men within their societies.

Kriemhild knows only too well that she needs extraordinary strength to achieve her goal of avenging her husband's murder. But Hagen counteracts all her efforts and can do so because he carries out all his moves against her with the full approval by Gunther and his brothers. However, the poet is straightforward enough to admit that she is the victim of male machinations, manipulations, and ultimately brutal abuse: “Mit iteniuwen leiden beswæret was ir muot” (1141, 1; She experienced additional suffering in emotional terms). The *Nibelungenlied* emerges as such an excellent example for the pervasiveness of male violence against women because the poet—male himself—openly admits this fact, also formulates explicitly that the consequences for the women are catastrophic, but he

utterly refrains from showing any pity or sympathy for their suffering. On the contrary, the glorious development toward the tragic death of all Burgundians is only possible because of the women's victimization at the hand of their male oppressors.

Certainly, family bonds are also at work, and Kriemhild finds much support among her brothers and her mother, but only as long as she submits under the patriarchal rule. Officially the men display clear respect for the women, especially when they join the mourning of those who have died, such as in the case of Helche, Etzel's first wife. When Rüedeger reports to the Burgundians that the Hunnish queen has died, they lament her passing away in unison, praising the noble woman for her "vil manige tugende" (1197, 3; for her many virtues). This, however, has no consequences for their estimation of the living women at their own court, that is, Kriemhild, whom Hagen both fears and hates as much as she pursues him with all her own hatred. Not surprisingly, Hagen persistently argues against allowing Kriemhild to marry Etzel, although the entire crown council supports the wooing. Again the different positions among the women become apparent, especially since Giselher indirectly accuses Hagen of having committed a severe crime against his sister and that he should finally demonstrate some loyalty toward her (1208). Moreover, without mincing words, Giselher reminds him of his previous deed against Siegfried, encouraging him to compensate Kriemhild for it now: "ergetzet si der leide, und ir ir habt getân" (1208, 3; compensate her for her suffering and for what you have done against her). Gernot displays much more caution, and only justifies his support for the marriage because he does not think that the Burgundians might ever visit the Huns upon Kriemhild's invitation (1211). Finally, the council agrees to support Etzel's wooing, though Kriemhild refuses for a long time to accept it, constantly referring back to her killed husband whom she must mourn.

Only when Rüedeger finally offers her his personal help to avenge anything that might have happened to her in the past, or rather in the future, as he really intends to say, does she change her mind: "er wolde si ergetzen, swaz ir ie geschach" (1255; he was willing to make up for whatever had happened to her before [or rather: what would ever happen to her]). He utters this pledge only in his private meeting with Kriemhild, not divulging it to anyone else. Of course, he has intended his pledge to serve only as a guarantee for protection during Kriemhild's stay at Etzel's court (1256). She reconfirms this, but formulates it also in a rather ambivalent manner: "swaz mir iemen getuot" (1257, 2; whatever anyone might do against me). Moreover, in her mind she considers the possibility that this new situation could help her to avenge past events: "... 'waz ob noch wirt errochen des mînen lieben mannes lîp?'" (1259, 4; what if after all the death of my husband might be avenged). Further, she seriously considers the possibility to rule over all

of Etzel's men, and that she would regain enormous treasures in compensation for the previous loss of her dowry which Hagen had dumped into the Rhine (1260).

In other words, the struggle of this tragic woman against her abuse and victimization continues unabatedly, and the poet does not hesitate to profile her as an enormously skillful negotiator and politician. In fact, the poet vacillates between admiration and fear, heroization and rejection, as the subsequent events clearly illustrate. But the struggle with Hagen continues, even at the moment of her departure for Etzel's court because her opponent knows how to prevent her from taking the last of the Nibelungen gold with her. Despite his previous action Kriemhild still disposes of huge treasures with which she intends to ingratiate Rüedeger's men (1270) and others in the Hunnish empire (1271). As soon as Hagen has learned about her intentions, however, he prevents her from doing so, arguing that the enmity between them will never disappear, hence that she would not be allowed to transport the gold with her (1272, 2). After all, as he knows only too well, this treasure would be used to build strength against him (1273, 1), so he can enforce his decision despite some meek protests on the part of Kriemhild's brothers (1274, 3). Rüedeger consoles her, promising that she would receive so much gold from her future husband that she would never be able to spend it all (1275), but then Gernot enters the fray, bringing the key to the treasure chamber and opening it based on his royal authority, as the text tells us (1277, 1). He then begins to distribute all that wealth, with the full approval of Gunther (1277, 4), thereby reconstituting the patriarchal dominance and rejecting, once again, Kriemhild's attempt to establish her own authority and, above all, royal influence over the men at court.

The key figure, however, in this struggle remains Hagen, as Kriemhild clearly perceives: "*Gewalt des grimmen Hagenen dûhte si ze starc*" (1281, 1; the fierce Hagen's power appeared to be too strong for her). She will always target all her wrath against him, and the subsequent events are all determined by Kriemhild's brooding hatred. The poet allows her to rise to the highest position as Etzel's queen, but he also portrays her as a she-devil at the very end, when he has Hagen use the specific word shortly before his death: "*vâlandinne*" (2371, 4). Consequently Hildebrand intervenes and kills her, not tolerating the fact that a woman resorted to the use of a weapon against one of the best heroes in the world (2375–76).

* * *

The tragic tone of the epic is self-evident, and the poet does not refrain from bitterly lamenting the deadly development leading to the death of all Burgundians. In the course of the events all the mighty and influential women

have died as well or disappeared in the narrative background. No mighty queen remains, although male rule also has proven to be ineffective and fragile. Rüedger's best efforts to reintegrate Kriemhild into courtly/heroic society have failed because of the fundamental conflict between her and Hagen. She remains a victim throughout, although she would have to be blamed for many events as well. Neither she nor Brünhild are flawless or fully consequential in their thoughts and actions, but they have to struggle hard, and ultimately cannot maintain their course within the world of men because of the political tensions and the profound challenges that Siegfried and Brünhild had presented to the court of Worms.

The old queens Helche (Gran) and Uote (Worms) fade away into the background, but both are of no great significance in the first place. Brünhild represents a severe threat to male dominance, although she had not even asked to be involved; instead she would have been happy to stay alone in her queendom, if Gunther would not have imposed himself upon her. Kriemhild is an integrative member of the Burgundian world, but her intimate association with Siegfried elevates her to an uncanny position which Hagen cannot tolerate. Whereas Brünhild is deceived, cheated, and abused in multiple ways, Kriemhild faces severe opposition and is ultimately badly abused and manipulated. All these women's efforts fail to achieve their end, and they become victims of male machinations. These men, however, also demonstrate considerable weakness in face of the women's actions and can only resort to highly dubious and brutal strategies to maintain their own power position within their society.

The outcome, altogether, illustrates how much the leading women protagonists experience subjugation, loss of influence, defeat, and even rape. Violence against these women is applied both in public and in private, and they experience this violence because they do not have any solid support system of their own. On the contrary, they struggle against each other and weaken their position within the heroic world even further. The poet presents these conditions without offering detailed comments. He accepts the fact that women (should) suffer from violence, and he demonstrates a certain degree of relief that the powerful, heroic women are destroyed/killed at the end. Patriarchy has won in this regard, but the price, surprisingly, proves to be the self-destruction of the heroic world in turn—certainly a most somber message contained in the *Nibelungenlied* that forces us to reflect upon the broad implications of rape for society at large.

Certainly, sexual violence plays only a secondary role, or is, at least, not expressed as drastically as in most other narratives or poems discussed in the other chapters. Nevertheless, the *Nibelungenlied* certainly confirms in multiple fashions the central point of our investigation: women's (sexual) suffering at the hands of their male contemporaries. There is no doubt that the anonymous poet harbored very little sympathy for his female protagonists, and actually delights, it seems, in the disappearance, or death, of the powerful women characters.

Indirectly, however, even he confirms the degree to which gender issues had gained central importance in the high Middle Ages, as the medieval German literary evidence confirms many times. Tragically, rape proves to be a rather common occurrence and determines the political world as well, especially when male competitions threaten the stability and harmony of society at large. Sexuality assumes only catalytic significance, however, whereas power struggles and fights for influence underlie the entire narrative. Curiously, perhaps even against the poet's own interests, the *Nibelungenlied* alerts us to the dark underside of the heroic world, and this even within the courtly context, if we keep the approximate date of the epic poem's composition in mind (ca. 1200). Whereas Hartmann von Aue addressed explicitly women's suffering as a fundamental threat to the well-being of his world, in the *Nibelungenlied* (especially, if not primarily, in ms. B) we can only observe that suffering (including rape) from the distance because the poet certainly harbored misogynous attitudes and projected his strong female figures as monstrous and dangerous. Nevertheless, even here we observe how much sexual violence could challenge the well-being of everyone involved insofar as rape affects society at large, potentially undermining all values and ideals determining the heroic-courtly world. This finds extraordinary expression in the verse narrative "Mauritius von Craûn," the topic of our next chapter, although there we deal with a completely different genre. Nevertheless, the issue remains the same, that is, the violent and aggressive relationship between the genders.

Chapter 3

Date Rape, or The Breaking of a Contract? The Problematic Case of *Mauritius von Craûn*. Modern Legal Issues in a Medieval Context

Whereas I have focused on rape mostly in the traditional sense of the word in the previous chapters, here I would like to turn to one of the most challenging and highly debated cases of a 'date rape' as it is more or less explicitly thematized in one early thirteenth-century Middle High German verse narrative, *Mauritius von Craûn*. The characterization of the sexual relationship between Mauritius and his beloved lady, the Countess of Beamont, in such a term represents, however, a hypothesis that requires a comprehensive, detailed, and nuanced analysis of the narrative development and the characterization of the protagonists. At the same time we can, or rather need to, draw from recent theoretical, even critical-legal, arguments as to what constitutes date rape and what conditions lead to this type of sexual crime. I am aware of the dangers of getting trapped, or sidetracked, by an anachronistic reading here considering the heavily patriarchal worldview dominating the Middle Ages, but the interpretation of the specific context and narrative strategies will allow us to steer clear of the Scylla of an exclusively male perspective, so typical in Medieval Studies, and of the Charybdis of a fashionable analysis according to post-modern and excessively feminist theories.

We have realized the true meaning and tragic consequences of date rape, or acquaintance rape, only in the last few decades, yet I do not think that the application of this term to certain forms of sexual violence as discussed in medieval literature will necessarily amount to anachronism. On the contrary, by means of this approach we will be well positioned to gain a much more accurate understanding what the anonymous author of *Mauritius von Craûn* might have truly intended, or how that verse narrative might have been discussed by the contemporary audience. After all, rape was not a topic kept hidden by taboo, as numerous historical documents illustrate.¹ First, I assume that whenever we find

¹ Rape, as mentioned before, has been discussed in a number of scholarly venues, and so rape in the Middle Ages, including in medieval Poland, see Krawiec, *Seksualność*, 2000, 161–203. But

concretely described cases of rape in medieval literature, we can also expect cases of date rape—a highly problematic perversion of the common erotic relationship. Next, I will suggest that this literary text provides us with significant insight into a profound social-historical problem and invites us to explore its many social and political ramifications. Considering the most peculiar development at the end of this novella, designed unmistakably in deliberate contrast to traditional courtly romances that usually conclude with a happy marriage, or some other harmonious erotic relationship (Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec*, similarly Hartmann von Aue's *Erec*, or the *Yvain/Iwein* respectively), there is no real alternative but to interpret this text in the light of modern, or rather timeless, concepts of 'date rape'.²

The victim, the Countess of Beamont, after the fact, seems to regret her foolish behavior and her mistakes in handling the love affair with Mauritius, if we can read the final scene involving her and the chambermaid discussing the outcome of the badly botched love affair in those terms. But this does not mean at all that Mauritius should not be identified as a sexual perpetrator, guilty of date rape. But, as these few indications might already tell us, this verse narrative has always been regarded with great curiosity and uncertainty, if not suspicion, as to its true meaning and the evaluation of sexual relationships. Not inappropriately, Kurt Ruh identified it as a "höfische Thesenerzählung" (courtly narrative built on theses), whereas I have resorted elsewhere to the theoretical term of 'game' to gain a deeper understanding of the conflictual relationship between the two protagonists.³

By now we can take a further step for a more critical interpretation of *Mauritius von Craûn*, being considerably more sensitized to the underlying conditions and the framework of the events in the night scene due to far-reaching findings of recent research on date rape (see below) today and also in the past. Whereas older scholarship tended to view the specific episode under discussion here as simply comic and hilarious, with the courtly lady determined by ambiguous feelings regarding her former lover's rough, brutal, and utterly uncourtly behavior at the

again, 'date rape' does not surface as a specific crime here. The issue at stake is most problematic, and has always constituted a challenge both in legal and ethical terms, both in the Middle Ages and today.

² Bennewitz, "Lukretia," 1989, 126–27. For older literature on date rape in general, see there. Cf. also Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 1975; *Date Rape*, ed. Williams, 1998; *Date Rape*, ed. Haley, 2003. I will explore the topic of 'date rape' at greater length also in the subsequent chapter.

³ Ruh, "Moriz von Craûn," 1970; rpt., 1983, 145–63; and, 1984, 129–44; Classen, "Das Spiel mit der Liebe," 1990, 369–98.

end,⁴ it seems much more appropriate to consider the facts more critically and in light of the fundamental question regarding the woman's 'free will.'

Where can the line be drawn that precisely and unequivocally separates playful resistance on the part of one sexual partner from a clear and unmistakable 'no' to any further advances, which then, however, might lead to a violent treatment by the other, i.e., rape? To raise this question is tantamount to sensitizing us to the problem of 'date rape' and other forms of sexual violence that have happened in the past and continue to vex our society. Fortunately, these issues have been discussed at length in modern times from many different perspectives, which constitutes the first major step toward dealing with them constructively and effectively, thereby opening a passage toward combating them decisively, even if we might never be completely in a position to overcome them.

Feminist legal scholars have identified a number of myths concerning date rape, such as the myth of the 'she asked for it' rationale, as if a woman's external appearance, gestures, mimicry, and behavior would lend themselves so easily and unequivocally for a man's interpretation that she signals to him to have sexual intercourse with her.⁵ Of course, men like to read such signs in a simplistic fashion, but we probably face here fundamental differences in communicative codes. As Lois Pineau has observed most insightfully, the general notion of the "normal aggressiveness of male sexuality" (12) has as much to be questioned as the myth of women wanting to be raped in order to avoid making the final decision in a sexual encounter (12). This is closely related to the myth that women desire sexual pleasure through rape (*ibid.*). Moreover, Pineau emphasizes the mythical, hence erroneous, nature of the idea that "male sexuality is not subject to rational and moral control" (13), and finally of the belief that "the greater part of a sexual encounter comes well within the bounds of morally responsible control of our own actions" (15). She subsequently reaches the important conclusion that "neither women nor men find sexual enjoyment in rape or in any form of noncommunicative sexuality" (17), unmasking date rape truly as a sexual, i.e., violent, crime. After all, as she later underscores in response to her critics, the language of willingness and rejection is easy to understand by a partner, and does

⁴ See, for instance, Fromm, "Komik und Humor," 1989, 39: "worauf Moriz sich zu der Dame legt, die mit zwiespältigen Empfindungen den Minnelohn gewährt" (whereupon Moriz lies down next to the lady, who grants the reward for love with ambiguous feelings).

⁵ Pineau, "Date Rape," 1996, 11. See also the other contributions to this volume, mostly responding to and critiquing Pineau's approach and analysis, such as Adams, "Date Rape and Erotic Discourse" (27–39), and Wells, "Date Rape and the Law: Another Feminist View" (41–50). See also *Debating Sexual Correctness*, 1995; *The Other Side of Silence*, 1995; Cowling, *Date Rape and Consent*, 1998; Pakes and Winstone, *Psychology and Crime*, 2007; *Date Rape*, ed. Haley, 2003; Farrell, with Svoboda, and Sterba, *Does Feminism Discriminate*, 2007.

not require any specific learning process. "Where her partner does not care, does not take the trouble to notice, and makes no inquiry as to the motivation for this unusual behavior [of opposition to or rejection of his advances], this failure is even more evident. It is in this situation where a negative response on her part, or a failure to take positive steps to determine her consent on his part, makes the encounter look more like assault."⁶

To be absolutely clear about it and to summarize the *communis opinio* in the legal field, there is no doubt that we have to identify date rape as a strategy to exert violence as the result of an effort on the part of the perpetrator to achieve a number of goals: It is a compensation mechanism for his inferiority complex and failure in some other area, and ultimately serves to gain power over a person of the other sex, if not of any minor status (children, and also other same sex partners). One could question some of Pineau's specific assumptions and offer slightly alternative perspectives here and there, but her arguments indeed lay bare some of the most fundamental characteristics of date rape and of how people ought to judge it.

Unfortunately, even today a considerable number of women accept violently sexual advancements as almost common and do not draw a clear distinction between date rape and voluntary, harmonious sexual intimacy. Or do we only hear male voices placed in women's mouths as a reflection of an inappropriate power imbalance? Women's common experience of forced sexual contact, especially with members of their own family, neighbors, doctors, priests, and other men in their social environment, much too often leads them to accept it "as normal; hence, the confusion between sexual activity and sexual violence."⁷ In fact, all statistical data from the last few decades confirm that the crime of rape has mostly been the result of acquaintance rape, or date rape, and this factor by itself has made it most difficult to prosecute this crime effectively, if it is brought to trial at all in the first place.⁸ "Even in cases where violence is present, and where parties are known, rape becomes reconstructed within the sexual discourse of pain and pleasure, of masochism and sadism, rather than within the discourse of violence, domination and tyranny."⁹ In light of this realization, we have to be most remindful of the high likelihood that date rape was even more common in the past than today because of different legal conditions disadvantaging women at large.

Altogether, the issues of rape and date rape were also of considerable concern for medieval authors because violent transgression has often been a more common

⁶ Pineau, "A Response," 1992, 98.

⁷ Griffin, *Rape*, 1979, 8; here cited from Fortune, *Sexual Violence*, 1983, 2.

⁸ Debating Sexual Correctness, ed. by Adele M. Stan, 1995.

⁹ Edwards, *Sex and Gender*, 1996, 331.

experience for women than we would perhaps imagine because the texts normally do not address this type of transgression as explicitly as we are wont to. Since this type of crime affected all of society, it was not simply ignored, especially when marriage partners or parents learned about it. Priests and other authority figures seem to have abused their position of power at times and seduced, violated, and raped their female parishioners or subordinates.¹⁰ Courtly love literature presents a complex set of examples that actually invite a closer analysis of cases where erotic wooing suddenly gives way to violence and a struggle to gain power via the control of the other person's body in sexual terms. In this sense the formulation 'date rape' proves to be so productive because it illustrates brilliantly the highly problematic nature of sexual relationships determined by subtle but distinct differences of interests on the part of the two sides.

Does wooing guarantee any success? Does medieval courtly literature suggest that male lovers regularly achieve their goals, or should have this good fortune? If that is not the case,¹¹ then we need to examine more closely how male protagonists overcome, at least in specific cases, their ladies's rejection and force them to fulfill their sexual desires. When a woman says 'no,' does this really mean 'no,' or does she implicitly indicate, as many men have liked to think, that she wants to be seduced, or coerced, into a relationship? Most importantly, why did medieval poets include the topic of 'date rape' into their texts, if we assume that for the time being, and how did they view it critically?

Does a man have any right to force himself sexually upon another person, mostly a woman—we cannot exclude homosexual rape either—even when he is convinced that she has explicitly invited him to do so through word or behavior? Of course not, and yet, in the real situation just too many times the male partner does not consider his behavior as transgressive (criminal) and simply takes what he wants, causing irreparable damage far beyond the physical wounding. Unfortunately, however, we are not dealing with an isolated or time-specific problem. Instead, sexual violence has always accompanied all gender relationships throughout history, so it makes good sense to view it also through the lens of medieval German literature.¹²

The sexual drive in human beings is very powerful, and often overwhelms the man (sometimes also the woman), leading to violence in a myriad of forms. Yet this does not mean at all that there would be any justification for rape, or date

¹⁰ See, for instance, the report by Agnes Blannbekin in her mystical visions, *Leben und Offenbarungen*, 1994, 126: "quidam sacerdos in nocte unam virginem deflorasset in villa, ubi et ista puella manebat . . ."

¹¹ Kaplowitt, *The Ennobling Power*, 1986.

¹² Nessler, *Histoire du vol*, 1949; Michael Kimmel, "An Unnatural History," 2003, 221–33; Vigarello, *A History of Rape*, 2001; Bourke, *Rape*, 2007; Ritscher, *The Semiotics*, 2007; Yamada, *Configurations of Rape*, 2008.

rape, nor does this suggest that rape is necessarily exclusively a sexual crime. Rather, the question emerges why a rapist would want to exert sexual violence, and why he does not control his (sometimes also her) desires and exert self-discipline. Date rape and rape have much more to do with power and violence than with sex, and they can affect hetero- and homosexual relationships. Consequently, the motivating factors leading to this violence need to be considered as methodologically and comprehensibly as possible in order to grasp the conditions and the context that lead to sexual violence.¹³ Such an approach also requires establishing a historical perspective, and the analysis of a medieval German verse narrative will provide a most meaningful avenue into this discourse and allow for a highly sophisticated level of critical reflection.

However, to claim that “the sexual nature of sexual violence is irrelevant” would dangerously blur our critical perception, as Marie Marshall Fortune correctly emphasizes:

The nature of the assault makes clear the totality of the violation of the person. During the attack or the abuse, the victim is not only out of control of her/his situation, but the victim is also assaulted in the most vulnerable dimension of the self. A sexual attack makes it clear that something has been taken away. Power has been taken away. The power to decide, to choose, to determine, to consent or withhold consent in the most concrete bodily dimension, all vanished in the face of a rapist or child molester. Being forced sexually against one's will is the ultimate experience of powerlessness, short of death.¹⁴

Studying this topic from another angle, it would be extremely irresponsible to pursue a naive approach and simply to expect that men ought to ‘behave’ according to general ethical, social, moral, and religious norms, which are, however, also determined by patriarchal norms and values. Crime does not belong to a rational category, though many criminals prepare themselves for their goal/s quite rationally and operate on a highly intellectual level in order to realize their objectives. Even sexual crime can be committed based on very rational strategies and methods.

Once again, tragically (date) rape happens just too often, and it seems to be a ghastly, but almost unavoidable phenomenon overall, if we consider the long history of mankind and men's almost commonly contemptuous treatment of women, whether out of a deep sense of misogyny, or as the result of fear, the difference between both motives being almost nil. Moreover, there are specific difficulties to distinguish between a clear case of rape and an emotionally imposed

¹³ Cahill, *Rethinking Rape*, 2001.

¹⁴ Fortune, *Sexual Violence*, 6–7. She also observes correctly that rape is a “pseudosexual act” (7) because “it is committed in order to fulfill nonsexual needs related to power, anger, and aggression” (8).

or enforced type of sexual encounter (see the *Nibelungenlied*). As Frances Olsen observes,

There is equal, consensual sexual intercourse on one hand, and bad, coercive sex imposed upon a female by a male aggressor on the other hand. But these two categories constitute a continuum of sexual relations; there is no bright line between them. Although most women do seek sexual contact with men, heterosexual behavior in our society is seldom fully voluntary; sex is usually to some extent imposed on females by males.¹⁵

Laws against rape have been issued throughout times, often rather harsh ones, especially in the Middle Ages, but none of them has ever completely eradicated sexual transgressions because sexual relationships mostly escape the rational approach and challenge even some of the basic legislation. In fact, we could write a whole cultural history of any society based on how it has handled sexuality and all the conflicts associated with it. Wars have been fought over sex, churches have been established and shaped in their response to sex, and countries have been constituted and have collapsed over their approaches to sexuality.¹⁶ To appeal to a rapist idealistically just to abstain from his (sometimes also her) criminal behavior would be a waste of time and an implicit admission of utter ignorance about the causes and conditions leading to this sexual crime. Tragically, however, although all those laws referred to above generically may have limited the danger for women to be raped by men under certain circumstances and under specific conditions, they have certainly not eliminated it. After all, crimes happen for certain reasons, and they happen everywhere and all the time because we are people. But it is most important to keep in mind that even the rapists are normally not looking for a sexual experience; instead they need compensation for anger, frustration, disappointment, and a sense of inferiority; hence they are searching for a means to overcome symptoms of "personality dysfunction."¹⁷

Thievery, for instance, cannot be completely suppressed or stopped as long as people have different access to wealth. Greed, moreover, even under the best possible circumstances in a utopian world, would still operate and motivate one person to steal from another in order to enhance the individual control over objects and power. Murder, to mention another case, will not be prevented simply

¹⁵ Olsen, "Statutory Rape," 311. In a certain sense, however, Olsen goes too far in her negative evaluation and reaches somewhat extreme conclusions about sexual relations at large in modern society, which might be a reflection of the historical conditions when she originally composed her essay (1984): "Even though sex is, to a great extent, eroticized violence and domination, celibacy is no choice for women. . . . Sexuality is socially constructed. In our male-dominated society, it has been constructed to serve the complex interests of men. Sexuality serves women's interests, if at all, only incidentally, as women can fit in and make the best of what's available" (314).

¹⁶ Eisenstein, *The Female Body*, 1988, 117–90.

¹⁷ Groth with Birnbaum, *Men Who Rape*, 1979, 84.

by taking away lethal weapons because the desire to kill another person, once it has emerged, will not be removed thereby because human emotions cannot be totally controlled by rational methods and laws.

Likewise, some, perhaps even many, sexual crimes happen because one person is determined by concupiscence and sexual needs and does not find a partner whom s/he can satisfy on a mutually voluntary basis. More commonly, however, sexual crimes occur because the perpetrator seeks quite different ends, yet falls back to sexuality as a most convenient and direct manner of establishing his superiority and of gaining power over his victim. Whether the failure to establish a normal, i.e., healthy, or natural, sexual relationship depends on a lack of love, communication skills, self-confidence, or other conditions (such as physical deformity), or whether the potential perpetrator might be determined by a perverted lust for sexual violence brought about by a flawed socialization process, does not need to be discussed here in greater detail.¹⁸

People have a vast range of different sexual needs, and also dispose of an enormous gamut of self-control mechanisms. Not surprisingly, prostitution and brothels have been around since time immemorial, serving a very important function for society to channel sexual desires and to avoid sexual crimes against those not willing to sell their bodies for sexual pleasure. Of course, one could also argue that, in a way, most prostitutes are similarly victims of sexual violence, ultimately imposed on them by society because they cannot find any other equally well paying jobs. By contrast, truly voluntary prostitution seems to be such an exceptional case that we would not have to discuss it here.

Here I want to focus on the special case of date rape, or some kind of a variant thereof, as discussed by one medieval German poet, the anonymous composer of *Mauritius von Craîn* (ca. 1220/1230).¹⁹ From a very general point of view, a literary-historical approach to our task allows us, as I have tried to argue already above, to participate substantially in the serious debate about rape today and how to handle this crime, making sure that we either contain it or eliminate it altogether.

¹⁸ The critical literature on this topic is legion; see, most recently, Holcomb, *Sexual Violence*, 2009; Anderson and Doherty, *Accounting for Rape*, 2008; Barnett, *Dangerous Desire*, 2004; *Sexual Violence and Sexual Abuse*, 2002.

¹⁹ *Moriz von Craîn*, Übersetzung . . . by Classen, 1992. For a comprehensive bibliography of the relevant research literature up to 1992, see 146–50. I will refer to more recent critical studies in the subsequent discussions, as relevant. For the historical-critical edition of our text, now see *Mauritius von Craîn*, ed. Reinitzer, 2000. Unfortunately, despite his best efforts to recover the original text, Reinitzer also applied a number of conjectures and emendations, intervening in the text to improve its quality for the critical edition and to make it more understandable as well (XIX). There are so many problems with this new approach that we basically ought to fall back to the original manuscript in this case as the only fully trustworthy source. For pragmatic reasons, I cite from my own edition and translation.

Investigating a literary text from the past where this crime takes place provides a significant lens through which to reflect upon the various positions that had been taken regarding (date) rape that we then could bring to bear fruitfully to the modern discourse on this crime.

This verse narrative of the knight Mauritius von Craûn provides an amazing opportunity to analyze some of the dark sides of courtly love because it is predicated on the traditional concept of courtly wooing, yet all the idealistic dreams and expectations are ultimately badly travestied, marred, and then collapse in face of a most complicated reality where none of the traditional values and ethical norms function as they are expected to. The knight's wooing, however, ultimately fails, and so he takes what he believes should have been his reward in the first place by exerting force, not accepting his lady's explicit 'no' for an answer.

By the same token, his lady had teased him for a long time, holding off any promises and rewards, until he would have satisfied her desire to test his chivalry and knightly honor, whereby she had also intensified his concupiscence, so it seems. For instance, when he meets her again after a lengthy process of self-reflection, she engages in a satirical debate with him, pretending not to understand his emotional distress, urging him to seek help with the famous medical doctors in Salerno in Southern Italy who would certainly succeed in healing him and taking away all his pains: *"... sie nerent iuch, sult ir genesen; / des müget ir wol sicher wesen"* (557–58; they will cure you, if you are supposed to get well again; you can be sure of that").

Finally, after much coaxing, she consents and accepts his wooing, although she still claims that she might lose her honor as a result of it (590). Revealing, however, that she had only operated with a rhetorical game so far, the lady suddenly admits that she loves him after all and that she has accepted him as her lover. In fact, indirectly she offers him a night of pleasure with her on the condition that he would organize a tournament on her behalf: *"... ich wil dir lônén, ob ich kan"* (603; *"... I'll reward you, if it will be in my power"*). In other words, the tournament is ultimately directly linked with their sexual relationship, and in a way these two people have reached an agreement, almost a contract that requires fulfillment on both sides, a point of great significance in the final evaluation of the question who bears the greatest responsibility, if not guilt, for the collapse of the love affair.²⁰

²⁰ Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 90–100, correctly rejects earlier speculations that the poet here revealed an urban, bourgeois mentality, or that the lady is almost granting Mauritius a marriage (irrespective of her still being married to the other knight). As the entire dialogue reveals, the two protagonists are carrying out a most problematic battle for superiority, which finally might grant one of them the status of the subject, the other of the object. But the countess can ultimately hold off her defeat at Mauritius's hand because she requests, as a condition, the performance of a tournament (98–100). Fischer engages in a very critical reading of Reimitzer's historical-critical edition (2000),

Not surprisingly, Mauritius at the end accomplishes all his tasks, though by way of resorting to exorbitant means and measures, outdoing any knight who ever might have wooed a courtly lady, as forcefully expressed by the fake ship that he has ordered to being built for his pompous arrival at his lady's castle. Yet he ultimately fails due to a small infraction on his part because he falls asleep while waiting for her in the evening after the tournament. Once the countess has observed him slumbering, she turns her back both to Mauritius and to courtly love altogether, and despite her chambermaid's intensive pleading and argumentation she leaves the room, annulling their mutual agreement because he broke, as she sees it, his part of the deal. But her lover is not a man who can accept a 'no' for an answer in that situation. Desperately, or rather deeply irritated and perhaps also furiously, he rushes into the marital bedroom, and then, out of frustration and embitterment, he imposes his will on her and date-rapes her, if that might be the right term.

In fact, at closer analysis the situation proves to be rather complicated and ambiguous, and we cannot even be sure whether he rapes her because we don't even know for sure who initiates their sexual union. Nevertheless, and that will be the major point of our discussion, the narrative set-up alerts us to the fundamental issue of date rape and forces us to participate in the implied, or suggested, discourse on the meaning of physical violence in a sexual relationship.

Mauritius von Craûn has survived in only one manuscript, and this one from the very late Middle Ages, meaning that there is a huge time gap between its original date of composition and the first surviving record of it. Emperor Maximilian I commissioned his custom officer in South Tyrol, Hans Ried, early in the sixteenth century to create a huge collection of medieval epics and verse narratives, including some romances and other genres. For Ried this seems to have been a great opportunity to enjoy the life of a scribe, well paid, without any external worries, so he took his time and spent the years from 1504 to ca. 1514/1516 copying down a large number of literary texts that must have been quite archaic already at that time. In 1508 Ried abandoned his job as custom official altogether to dedicate all of his time and energy to the task as a scribe. In 1512 he entered the imperial chancellery in Innsbruck, but he continued with his work on the literary manuscript. He seems to have died before May 7, 1516 after having accomplished his assignment.²¹ All the texts included in Ried's manuscript date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and were obviously supposed to serve the emperor's strategy to increase his own public reputation as a preserver and collector of

rejecting many of his emendations and conjectures, and those by previous scholars.

²¹ Wierschin, "Das 'Ambraser Heldenbuch'," 1976, 429–41, 493–507, 557–70. See also Thornton, "Die Schreibgewohnheiten," 1962, 52–82.

literary antiquities and as a representative of traditionally chivalric culture.²² But we have no records about how this anthology was practically used, or whether anyone actually ever read the manuscript.

This voluminous collection is today known as the *Ambraser Heldenbuch* because of the partial dominance of heroic epics ("Heldenbuch" = Book of Heroes, or Heroic Epics), such as the most important Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* and *Diu Clage*, *Kudrun*, *Dietrichs Flucht*, and *Rabenschlacht*. Nevertheless, it also contains famous Middle High German courtly romances, such as Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and Ulrich von Liechtenstein's didactic *Frauenbuch*, then the collection of satirical narratives by The Stricker, known as *Pfaffe Amîs*, the profound moralizing verse novella *Helmbrecht* by Wernher the Gardener, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Titarel* fragment, and also a fragmentary version of the enigmatic letter by the mysterious Prester John.²³ Some of these texts, such as *Mauritius von Craûn*, have been preserved practically only in this miscellany manuscript and is not even known to us through any other source. By the same token, we have no records as to any influence this verse narrative might have exerted on other poets. The motif finds no parallels, and no other writer ever referred to *Mauritius von Craûn*, which seems to make it to a highly isolated case in the history of medieval German literature.²⁴

The *Ambraser Heldenbuch* was kept in the library of Castle Ambras outside of Innsbruck for ca. 300 years, and was brought to Vienna in 1806 upon the order of Emperor Francis I. Today it is housed there in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vin. Ser. nov. 2663).²⁵ The date when the anonymous author composed his *Mauritius von Craûn* cannot be determined with all the necessary clarity, and scholars have proposed both ca. 1180/1184 and ca. 1230, perhaps even slightly later.²⁶ We have only one reference in the text that serves us as a *terminus post quem*, that is, in the verses 1158–63 where the narrator comments on the bed in the room where Mauritius has to wait for his lady after the tournament. He hopes that this bed might be as beautiful as the one that Heinrich von Veldeke had described in his *Eneit*, the Middle High German version of the Old French *Roman d'Eneas*, from ca. 1174/1184. So *Mauritius* must have been composed sometime later.²⁷

²² Jan-Dirk Müller, *Gedechnus*, 1982, 48.

²³ See Reinitzer's introduction to his edition, *Mauritius von Craûn*, VII–XII. For bibliographical information regarding the *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, see *Rabenschlacht*, 2005, XV–XVIII.

²⁴ Ziegeler, "Moriz von Craûn," 1987, 692–700. Although numerous studies on this narrative have appeared since then, offering alternative interpretations and opening up new perspectives, Ziegeler's article still basically summarizes everything we know about *Mauritius*, as it is identified today.

²⁵ See the facsimile edition: *Ambraser Heldenbuch*, 1973. For a detailed description, a table of contents, and a bibliography, see www.handschriftencensus.de/3766 (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011).

²⁶ Reinitzer, in his introduction to *Mauritius von Craûn*, XV–XVI, contents himself with a rough dating from around 1200.

²⁷ Reinitzer, "Zeder und Aloe," 1976, 1–34.

Beyond this brief comment, there are no other reflections in the text that would allow us to pinpoint its original date more precisely, though the clearly satirical approach to knighthood and courtly love, if not its utter travesty at the end, might indicate that *Mauritius* was composed rather late (possibly up to 1250?).²⁸ The poet seems to have had Andreas Capellanus's *De amore* in mind when he created the intensive debate between the knight and his lady, and between the lady and her chambermaid, though it remains a mystery whether he (if not a she!) was familiar enough with that Latin treatise from ca. 1180/1190.²⁹ Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* (ca. 1210) could have provided the poet with some inspiration, and other Middle High German poems and epics have also been adduced as possible sources, but there is no certainty.³⁰ At the conclusion of the novella the author complains about the poverty of the German language that had made it difficult for him to achieve his literary goal. Such a rhetorical topos was usually reserved for references to Latin sources, which also might apply to *Mauritius*, but again this does not put us into a position to correlate this novella with any specific literary model.³¹

More important, we can be almost certain that a scandalous love affair between Maurice II, Duke of Craon, also known as a troubadour poet, and the wife of his neighbor, Richard of Beaumont, around 1200 in Northeastern France, served the Middle High German poet, who apparently, judging from his linguistic characteristics, hailed from the Western parts of Germany (Rhine-Frankish),³² as a basis to compose his tale. This affair was apparently the origin for the Old French *fablel* "Du Chevalier qui recovra l'amour de sa dame," which contains many significant similarities with, yet also important differences to, *Mauritius*, particularly as far as the conclusion and hence the relationship between the lover and his lady are concerned.³³

²⁸ Older research had still assumed the contrary; see Worstbrock, "Translatio artium," 1965, 1–122; critically opposed was Bayer, "*âne ère*," 1981, 180–211.

²⁹ Sprague, "Manifestations of Love," 2003, 93–122.

³⁰ Tomasek, "Die mhd. Verserzählung," 1986, 254–83.

³¹ Reinitzer, introduction, XVII.

³² Reinitzer, introduction, XIII–XIV.

³³ For a recent edition of this *fablel*, see the edition by Heimo Reinitzer, 2000, 97–111. Much has been written about virtually every aspect in *Mauritius von Craûn*, though most of the key points in the relevant research debate do not concern us here. For more details, see Fischer, *Ritter*, 8–10; for the possible source of the Middle High German verse narrative, see 52–60. He correctly puts all the older discussions about the historical model into perspective: "Das alles ändert nichts an dem Befund, daß der mit dem Namen 'Mauritius von Craûn' belegte Held zur Hauptsache ein poetisches Konstrukt aus Epideiktik und angewandter Ritterdidaxe ist" (58; All that does not change anything about the fact that the protagonist, identified as "Mauritius von Craûn" is mainly a poetic construction based on epideictics and applied chivalric didacticism). One of the best studies, grounded in the historical examination of our tale, still proves to be Harvey, *Moriz von Craûn*, 1961.

The premise of our verse narrative consists of the male protagonist's almost desperate attempts to win his lady's love, but Countess Beament holds off for a long time until she finally shows pity and promises to grant a night with her in private if he organizes first a tournament on her behalf, a major cultural event for all medieval courts.³⁴ She has not yet witnessed one in her whole life (601) because of her husband's apparent lack of courtly education, lack of resources, or maybe even fear of knighthood, as demonstrated by his clumsy and also fatal handling of the first joust during which he kills his opponent accidentally, upon which he then immediately withdraws to his castle, deeply weighed down by his feeling of guilt and grief (904–18). Worse even, because of his behavior there might be the danger that the tournament would have to be cancelled, a great loss for all participants, and especially for Mauritius, not only because of the huge financial investment in his ship and the extensive equipment for the knightly combat, but especially because he also faces the danger that his lady might no longer welcome him as her lover.

Addressing the crowd stunned by the sudden turn of events, he appeals to them not to abandon their chivalric entertainment because of one dead man—certainly a somewhat grotesque notion. Otherwise none of them would earn any honor, and he himself would drown on dry land (926), a significant metaphor that might foreshadow the future events insofar as the protagonist pursues goals that are mostly self-centered. Of course, as a lover he would like his lady to return his feelings and to reward him for his service, but from the beginning we learn that this dream of a relationship with the countess is highly problematic insofar as she does not seem to respond to his wooing positively, as he knows only too well: “sî lônet mir ze spâte” (430; she rewards me too late).

On the other hand, Mauritius is not that ignorant to overlook the considerable public honor that he has earned through all of his deeds performed to attract her attention (436), which, in a way, was supposed to satisfy most of his needs as far as society was concerned. Probably not long after *Mauritius von Craûn*, the Styrian aristocratic nobleman Ulrich von Liechtenstein (ca. 1200/1210–1275) addresses, in his *Frauenbuch*, a didactic, dialogic treatise on the essence of courtly love and the most problematic development of gender roles at his time, this very issue. At one point he specifically refers to a worthy knight whose lady does not immediately, at least not adequately, respond to his wooing: “und lieze si inn immer ungewert, / daz er doch daz verbære, / daz er iht unstæte wære, / oder daz daz ieman wûrde erkant, / wer si wære und wie genant / wær ir vil wîplich schoene lîp” (and if she were never to grant him a reward, he ought to accept that and avoid [at all costs] to waver in his constancy or to allow that anyone would learn who she is and what

³⁴ Das ritterliche Turnier, 1985; Belestracci, *La festa*, 2001.

the name is of this beautiful lady).³⁵ Although Mauritius explicitly had confirmed at the beginning the validity of such social ideology determining the relationship between lovers, at the end he utterly ignores the very same teachings and resorts to violence, revealing, unbeknownst to himself, how much he actually resembles Emperor Nero as discussed in the prologue to the verse narrative.³⁶

We also need to keep in mind that the countess initially had agreed to accept only hesitantly the knight as her lover, and apparently with considerable trepidation, which subsequently motivates her, at the critical moment in the secret meeting room, to abandon Mauritius immediately again when she finds him asleep while waiting for her, with his head resting in the chambermaid's lap. Ultimately, we might wonder how much the protagonist really tries to impose himself upon his lady because she has never given him any realistic reason to assume that she might love him as well with all her heart, here ignoring her pledge expressed by the ring that she had handed over to him as a token. Perhaps not quite surprisingly, at their first meeting she even gets angry at him for not being able to speak (534), and then she only mocks his laments about his suffering (535–58). Moreover, although she subsequently agrees to be his mistress, she expresses grave concerns regarding the danger of losing her honor as a result of this affair (583–91).

In other words, from Mauritius's perspective, his task consists of 'taming the shrew,' whereas for her this affair represents a risky operation that could easily turn into her loss of public reputation and esteem, especially because of her inexperience in courtly love and even courtly culture. As we will observe later, we are actually not expected to develop any true sympathy for the lady, who finally emerges as the one responsible for the breakdown of the love affair. Nevertheless, again keeping Ulrich von Liechtenstein's teaching in mind, her bad behavior must not, and cannot, serve as any excuse for Mauritius's behavior.

In contrast to the Count of Beamont, Mauritius accomplishes all the tasks expected from him by his lady, and even more, but then, in the evening, he falls asleep, which allows, or rather forces, his lady to reject him after all. Once he has woken up only a short time later—though by then too late—and realized the profound disappointment that she has caused him, he does not rest until he has forced his way into the marital bedroom, where he knocks out the husband by way of frightening him out of his wits, and then lies down in the bed next to his beloved. Whether the subsequent event can be identified as love making, as raw sex, or even as rape, has been hotly debated, and the entire scene will allow us to

³⁵ Ulrich von Liechtenstein, *Das Frauenbuch*, 2003, vv. 1754–59.

³⁶ Reinitzer, "Zu den Tiervergleichen," 1977, 1–18; I have argued elsewhere that a much more global condemnation of chivalry and of Mauritius as its representative permeates the text, Classen, "Mauritius von Craün and Otto von Freising," 2006, 28–49.

grasp the actual discourse on sexual violence that must have been practiced at the medieval courts where narratives such as *Mauritius von Craûn* were presented and performed.

As we have already observed in the case of Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and the anonymous heroic epic *Nibelungenlied*, the world of twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature was not necessarily determined by idyllic conditions.³⁷ On the contrary, one of the main tasks and objections pursued by the poets of that time—if this is not a perpetual goal of all good literature—has certainly been to sensitize their audiences to profound problems within society, and hence especially to the conflicts between the genders. Sexual violence might be only an extreme form of those conflicts, but it proves to be a catalytic case scenario that sheds important light on the fundamental tensions, problems, concerns, troubles, and disagreements that have continually and pervasively determined the social structures and, above all, the public discourse.

Perhaps more than most other courtly romances and narratives from the high and late Middle Ages, *Mauritius von Craûn* reflects upon the tense relationships between the genders and problematizes them to an extreme extent, that is, up to and beyond the breaking point. Certainly, in later centuries this discourse was to find a much more explicit expression in the exchanges among the narrators of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Heinrich Kaufringer's *mæren*, and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*, to mention only the best-known examples.³⁸ However, in our verse novella the focus rests almost primarily on the difficult affair between the wooing knight and his lady who teases him and leads him astray for a long time, seemingly ready to accept her lover and to allow him to enjoy a sexual experience with her, and yet holding him off. The surprising outcome, certainly negative, despite the fact that both sleep with each other, forces the audience to take positions and to debate those intensively, whether one sides with the lady or her lover. Indeed, this proves to be a situation which strongly suggests that the anonymous poet might have been familiar with the Latin treatise on courtly love, *De amore*, by Andreas Capellanus, where debate involving lovers dominates the stage, or some of the Middle High German love debate poems.³⁹

Mauritius proves to be so fertile as a literary challenge because there is no clear moral or ethical message, or rather, it leaves us stranded with highly conflicting

³⁷ See also my chapter on 'Domestic Violence' in Classen, *The Power*, 2007, 187–230.

³⁸ Numerous German poets of short verse narratives, identified as *mæren*, also contributed to this intense discourse, but practically no one created such a comprehensive and cohesive whole of tales as Boccaccio or Chaucer with a master narrator and a meta-narrative discourse. Nevertheless, the same problems and conflicts carefully examined and presented by those two grand poets also emerged and were often reflected in masterpieces of *mæren* literature; see *Erotic Tales*, 2009.

³⁹ For this genre, see the seminal study by Glier, *Artes amandi*, 1971.

messages about how to evaluate the two protagonists and the question whether the lady has been victimized or not, whether she becomes the victim of date rape, whether she has truly loved her knight or not, whether she really intended to develop a love affair with him, or whether she only strung him along, always ready to abandon him at any moment if she could find an appropriate excuse. Should she have forgiven him his exhaustion that made him fall asleep while waiting for her in the evening after the tournament, as her chambermaid strongly suggests, warning the countess that such a harsh position might endanger courtly love altogether and alienate men everywhere from wooing ladies (1315–20)? Or is the lady correct in her assessment that no man can be trusted, since they are all liars, as illustrated by Mauritius, as she argues (1353)? What does it mean that the female protagonist suddenly expresses her desire to be free of any man who might woo her (1345–57)? She seems to be afraid that one little infraction, one little rumor would quickly reveal their whole secret to society and that soon enough she would become the object of public disgrace: “sô wære mîn êre verkouft” (1360; then my honor would be sold). The chambermaid’s warning that the force of love cannot be resisted, not even by the countess (1372–74), irrespective of social constraints, is fruitless since her mistress insists on preserving her freedom and independence, although she never refers to her husband and her marriage in this scene with one word. The maid’s argument that courtly knights can be trusted in pursuing only their ladies’ best interest—“die man sint sô bescheiden, / daz iegelîcher minner tuot / durch diu wîp, danne uns wære guot” (1322–24)—has no impact on the countess, and it might not be valid at any rate, considering Mauritius’s behavior at the end. Similarly, the consideration that no one except she and her maid are witnesses of Mauritius’s slight failure due to his excessive exhaustion (1326–27) has no relevance for the lady.

Even more curiously, the countess is fully aware that Mauritius represents the epitome of all knighthood and has truly served her to the best of his abilities (1266–69). In addition, she worries about the consequences of her decision to reject him now, which would be the greatest sin of all in matters of love: “daz wære ein solichiu sünde, / die ich nimmer überwünde” (1271–72; it would be such a sin that I would never be able to get absolved from). Nevertheless, for her the entire affair was based on a contract which she had been forced to accept by him and which she was, after all, prepared to observe. Hence she was ready to reward him in that moment for his extensive labors (1275–76). Insofar as she believes that for Mauritius sleeping was more important than to await his lady being awake, she thinks that he has broken his part of the contract, which frees her to rescind her own promise.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ This aspect has been discussed from many different perspectives; see, for instance, Ortmann, “Die Bedeutung,” 1986, 385–407; Kokott, “Mit grossem schaden,” 1988, 362–85; Fritsch-Rössler, “Moriz von Craun,” 1991, 227–54.

Was there ever any love between these two people? Did she only play with him, or did she really hope that he would become her lover? We are not in a situation to tell because of a lack of clearly recognizable clues in the text, though we can be certain that the countess quickly and without much concern for him dismisses Mauritius and leaves the secret meeting space, rejecting the possible affair altogether. Not surprisingly, the male protagonist, once he has awoken from his nightmare (literally!), quickly realizes how badly he has been duped by her, and this profoundly changes his attitude toward his lady. We could safely assume that not love, but hatred, fills his heart, which might explain why he then decides to enter the matrimonial sanctum with all the force available to him and to take what he believes belongs to him. Mauritius is no longer a lover; instead he has turned into a warrior who insists on getting his end of a bargain at any cost.

We do not even know for sure whether the final bedroom scene represents violence, if not rape. The only point we can be absolutely certain about is the collapse of the erotic affair and the failure of courtly culture to maintain and to support the happy relationship between these two people because at the conclusion Mauritius gets up from the bed in which he had slept with his lady, returns her gift of a ring to her, and departs full of anger, without ever returning: "ich wil iu nimmer werden holt" (1626; I will never again love you). But perhaps we might also have to admit that this relationship was not even happy and harmonious from the beginning.

After all, Mauritius appears on the stage as a deeply frustrated man who bitterly complains about the failure of all his efforts to convince his lady to accept him as her lover. Then, there are only very brief moments of mutual agreement between them, as documented by a kiss exchanged (614) and a ring that she grants him as a gift (605–09). Otherwise, the physical, and hence also the emotional, distance between these two people is never truly overcome, despite the contract, as some scholars have argued. And at this point we might raise the question whether a contract has anything to do with love and whether the ring that Mauritius had received from the countess, along with her verbal promise, truly constitutes an absolute right for this man to insist on the sexual fulfillment.⁴¹

The lady regularly observes him from far away, and Mauritius fights on the outside of her castle, both metaphorically and literally. He achieves many triumphs as a knight in the tournament, and he also impresses everyone at the festival—significantly not his lady, though—with his artificial ship with which he had arrived at the castle in preparation of the tournament. Only at the end does Mauritius actually enter the core room of the castle, where the countess lies in bed with her husband, but this perpetration—perhaps in spacial and metaphorical

⁴¹ Thus, for instance, Bauschke, "Sex und Gender," 1999, 318–19.

terms already a form of rape by the knight who steps into an area where only the husband should be entitled to reside—has been anticipated already a long time earlier by the fake ship, the theatrical tournament, and Mauritius's skillful pretenses as a lover.

Not surprisingly, he forces himself upon his mistress, already deeply filled with rage and anger, and he only sleeps with her, it seems, because it is the outcome of their contract that he expected to receive from her. Afterwards he gets up from the bed, returns the ring to his lady, and abandons her for good. Perhaps we might have to ask who actually raped whom here. After all, the countess does not rest passively in the bed, despite her husband being knocked out because of the alleged appearance of the ghost of the man whom he had killed in the tournament, as Mauritius pretends to be (1570–74). Expressing her great astonishment and amazement at the development of events, suddenly facing her lover right next to her in bed after all, despite having explicitly rejected him, she knows nothing better but to turn to him and to embrace him with her arms: *"sî begreif in mit den armen"* (1613).

In other words, she seemingly proves to be the active partner in this situation, initiating their love making, but the narrator emphasizes clearly in the next lines: *"nû begunde ouch er erwarmen / unde tete der vrouwen ichn weiz waz"* (1614–15; now he began to warm up as well and did something with the woman, I don't know what). Does he rape her? If we read this passage closely, we would have to deny it, though a certain degree of ambiguity remains: *"also tetten Sy auch hie. / Zu handt als ditz ergie"* (1619–20; so they also did [like all other lovers]. Once this had happened . . .). Yet, as soon as he is satisfied, now post-orgasmic, he immediately rises from the bed, returns the ring to her, complains bitterly about her having broken their mutual commitment and laments the futility of all his service in trying to win her love. Indeed, as he emphasizes, if all women acted like her, that is, remained inactive and non-responsive, *"... ichn gediende keiner nimmer mê . . ."* (1633; "... I would not serve anyone of them any longer). Contemptuously, Mauritius encourages his mistress to return to her husband and to take care of him in his painful state (1634), hence to live from now on a life without honor and courtly love (1635). Moreover, he describes himself as robbed of his own honor, and bitterly warns her that he would never forgive her for that (1636–37).

But what does this all mean? Did they enjoy a happy sexual encounter? Did she really accept him as her lover in the marital bed? How did Mauritius enter the bedroom, and what did his appearance like a lion stained with the blood of a recent meal (1536–37) signal both to the husband and to his wife? Would we be justified to talk about a date rape here? Let us halt at this moment and step several scenes backwards to recoup some of the foreshadowing and the anticipatory elements that might allow us to examine this case much more cogently and deeply.

The ship itself with which Mauritius arrives at the castle carries a considerable metaphorical and symbolic function, shedding important light on the protagonist and his attempt to impress his lady. But it is only a hollow construction, drawn from the inside by horses, and proves to be, despite the use of most valuable building material and ornaments, expensive fabric and jewels, nothing but an empty mask without any solid foundation. In other words, it reflects nothing but the protagonist's own lack of substance, or character, who tries to impress his lady the same way as an opera star today would appear on the stage and try to entertain, if not to dazzle, his audience, without being the actual person whom s/he had impersonated.⁴²

Significantly, the countess recognizes the ludic, or rather deceptive, quality of the huge contraption of the ship; hence she actually ridicules Mauritius for his pompous self-enactment. Once the ship has arrived near the castle where she and her husband reside, she asks her maids about the true nature of this almost magical object. Although the ship seems to be built very well, she wonders whether Saint Brandan, a well-known, though certainly mythical figure, might have reached this location on his quest for miracles (884–85).⁴³ Furthermore, she goes so far in her mockery that she suggests that it might actually be the Anti-Christ, which would necessitate for them all to prepare themselves for the Day of Judgment (886–88). If that were the case, however, the erotic affair would be doomed from the beginning, marred by duplicity, bad showmanship, and a gaudy display of wealth in public whereas a true lover should be available for his lady only, prove his trustworthiness, and taciturnity. Curiously, even the ordinary people express a similar opinion, though they certainly admire the massive construction. Observing the huge ship, they marvel about the foolishness to have such a vessel far away from any body of water: "hie enist diu Mase noch der Rhîn!" (688; here is neither the river Maas nor the Rhine!).

There does not seem to be any good reason for the ship unless Mauritius might be afraid of a new Biblical deluge (691). But the ship can be moved with the help of horses that have been brought in secretly, which ultimately creates the impression as if the ship were actually sailing across land. In fact, a bystander would have to believe that s/he is caught in a dream (735). Moreover, the ship and its crew suspiciously resemble a pillaging company, as if they were all pirates. As the narrator comments, the entire company inside the ship performs such music and sings such songs that an observer could not help but fear the worst: "pfifen unde rotten, / alse er galiotten / vuorte mit in sînem here / unt wolde rouben ûfem

⁴² Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 105–16.

⁴³ Pietrizik, *Die Brandan-Legende*, 1999.

mere" (869–72; they played flutes and rotes in such a way as if he [Mauritius] led pirates in his army and intended to do robbery on the sea).⁴⁴

For the knights the appearance of the ship and Mauritius's invitation to a tournament represents a most welcome challenge and opportunity to demonstrate their chivalry and knightly skills in public. Indirectly, however, they all submit voluntarily under the directorship of Mauritius's staging of a kind of operetta in which he assumes the central role, intending to dazzle his lady so much that she would not have any reason to reject him, finally granting him the ultimate wish. We might wonder whether Mauritius is not spinning a kind of spider-net around the countess, worried that she might pull out of the promised love affair in the last minute, considering that he does not spare any money to charm her to the best of his abilities, depleting all his resources, building that ship, and staging the tournament at his own costs. After all, once he has arrived at the countess's castle, he anchors there: "hieze er vüeren sîn werc" (892; he ordered the anchor to be released), and thus can control the land: "dâ mite behabete er daz lant" (894; thereby he could reach the land; or, more to the point: thereby he controlled the land/country). In this moment the countess might foreshadow the future events when she comments, though only facetiously here, that the ship might have been commandeered by the Anti-Christ and that it signals the Day of Judgment.

But at that point of time all people would have to submit completely under God's will, which could imply that she wants to indicate that Mauritius's arrival threatens her in her free decision making power. After all, as we will observe later, the entire narrative is predicated on the question to what extent the wooed lady has any choice in accepting or rejecting her lover under those most curious circumstances, bereft of all protection by her husband and exposed to the raging fury of an insulted and frustrated lover.⁴⁵

The situation for the Countess Beament grows worse by the minute as soon as the tournament has started because her husband, the first one to begin the jousting, accidentally kills, as already noted above, his opponent and immediately withdraws to his castle, deeply grieved over this tragedy, crying, and despairing (906–18). The count demonstrates thereby that he knows nothing about traditional courtliness and chivalry, neglects all his duties as a host, fails to perform properly as the master of the estate, and simply yields the concrete and the metaphorical field of the tournament to his competitor Mauritius, whom he does not even seem to know on a personal level or as organizer of the tournament (916–18).

⁴⁴ I have discussed the various options on how to interpret this reference to "galiotten" in the commentary to my translation, 123.

⁴⁵ See the examples among the *mæren* discussed later on where a husband encourages his wife to invite her lover to her room where he himself would hide and later frighten his sexual competitor, which does not happen anyway.

The protagonist immediately sets all his persuasive strategies into motion and encourages the entire group of attendees to disregard this one case of fatality—a rather morbid attitude toward the dead knight and an expression of Mauritius’s utter lack of concern for the well-being of others—and to continue with the chivalric festivities as if the death of a knight would not mean much. Cunningly, he refers to his ship that would not bring any of them the least bit of honor if they consent to break off the tournament. In fact, he goes so far as to warn them of the dire consequences if he were to “drown” with his ship on dry land because of the failure to put the ship to good use: “‘. . . solde ich ertrinken âne sê’” (926; “. . . should I drown without any water”). So the tournament continues, but we are indirectly and quickly informed about Mauritius’s highly problematic character, driven by absolute passion to achieve his goal to conquer the countess at any cost.

The narrator takes pain to underscore his hero’s accomplishments to such an extent that we begin to wonder whether there might be some satire at play. No knight whom he encounters proves to be a match for him, as he succeeds in unhorsing all of them, and soon enough there are only unmanned horses running around (999–1000). We have no idea, however, whether his lady is watching his triumphal performance during the day, especially since her husband has entirely withdrawn from the tournament. Instead, the narrative focus rests on Mauritius only, and this until the evening once all have retired from their heavy exercises.

Whereas before the protagonist had dazzled them all with the splendor of his ship, his tent, his armor, and his enormous hospitality, now he gains further accolades by inviting all participants to be his guests, and by giving away all the parts of the entire ship to his squires and then to the entertainers. Some of those immediately fight over every piece, and even begin to hurt each other in the struggle to grab as much of the valuable cloth, the wood studded with gems, the rudder, and other parts. One of them even meets his death in the melee (1050), which sheds most curious light on the true nature of Mauritius’s generosity.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ We are uncannily reminded of the violence that erupts during the wedding festivities in Lappenhausen in Heinrich Wittenwiler’s *Der Ring*. I will discuss this in a later chapter at greater length, but it deserves to be observed already here that medieval poets regularly associated rape with the death of innocent by-standers, as if rape reflects a general decay of social *mores* and civility. Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 155–56, observes that excessive munificence, both in the medieval world and (maybe even today) in primitive societies served the important function of establishing one’s supreme priority and social rank. But he errs when he claims that Mauritius’s exorbitant gift-given guarantees him the reward from his lady. She is not present, she does not know at all what he is doing outside of the castle, and might only have an inkling of his *ostentatio* and *prodigientia* (Fischer, 156). Moreover, she has never experienced a tournament and does not expect anything as exorbitant as her lover’s efforts produce. In fact, she basically rejects him at the end because the result of all of his efforts have incapacitated him, even if only temporarily, for the hoped-for love-making. Fischer seems to be a victim of his own reading according to which a purely contractual thinking in this love affair can achieve the desired goal at least in pragmatic

Whatever he does, it seems, results in some form of excess and violence, which might be the best explanation why the narrator had associated his protagonist and his ship crew with pirates. Not surprisingly, then, at the end the hero simply storms into the marital bedroom and forces himself upon his lady although she had clearly given him, through her words to the chambermaid and through her action, that is, leaving the room and thus discarding all and any interest in a love affair with Mauritius, an unmistakable message. But again, he is not the kind of man who would accept a 'no' from his lady, especially not after his extensive and intensive efforts to build the ship, to organize the tournament, and to triumph in it as its absolute champion, who tops it all off with his unparalleled generosity, irrespective of the death of one of the recipients.

The most irritating statement uttered by the Countess of Beamont, when she is about to reject her former lover because he is asleep at the very moment when he is supposed to become her active, ardent, and energetic lover, consists of her claim that she does not care about the alleged force of lady love, or *Minne* (1375–77). Her problem proves to be the utter disregard of actual emotions that deeply influence people; hence her as well. She believes that she can act and decide on her own life independently, so she forces the maid to inform Mauritius that he has to go home without having received his reward (1379–83). Most poignantly, if not aggressively, she underscores, though only in her conversation with the maid because she would probably not dare to say it into Mauritius's face once he would awaken, "' . . . bit in, daz er sich baz beware, / daz ist hernâch sîn gewin'" (1382–83; ask him that he watch out better, which will later be to his profit).

To say the least, the outcome of this scene is tantalizing and torturous, and clearly spells danger for the lady, who does not seem to have understood the intensity with which Mauritius had prepared himself for this one moment of possible love making. Nor does she take into consideration the extent to which the hero has invested all of his property in order to impress his beloved, and hence how much he is expecting, consequently and actually also logically, to be rewarded now with her love. Many scholars have therefore taken the knight's side and accused the countess of breaking the contract, who seems to admit her own guilt at the end when she cries over the loss of her lover.⁴⁷

terms because the man would be entitled to a woman's body if he wastes all of his material property in her service. Medieval German poets, and so also their European contemporaries, commonly idealize the concept of *mâze* (moderation), which would also apply to a lover's behavior. But Mauritius knows nothing about it; in fact, he might be regarded as the new Nero of whom the narrator talks at length in the prologue, perhaps identifying his protagonist with this monstrous Roman emperor. See Classen, "Mauritius von Craün and Otto von Freising's The Two Cities," 2006.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Bauschke, "Sex und Gender," 1999, 322.

Not surprisingly, Mauritius wakes up as soon as the countess has left the room, and he comments that he had suffered through a nightmare. As soon as the maid has revealed to him what had happened and that she herself had tried in vain to convince her lady to act differently, the protagonist changes his attitude completely, and his former love turns into anger, disappointment, if not wrath and enmity. He emphasizes: “nû hân ich ir unstæte / allererste rehte bekant” (1428–29; now I have finally recognized her lack of loyalty). But first Mauritius still tries to rely on diplomacy, so to speak, and asks the maid to intervene on his behalf and to appeal to his lady to change her mind.

Interestingly, this attempt achieves the very opposite effect because the countess becomes irritated over Mauritius’s insistence and her own maid’s collaboration with him: “umbe sî sich kêrte, / also si ir zorn lêrte, / unt gebârte, also sî sliefe” (1505–07; she turned the other way, moved by her wrath, and then acted as if she were asleep). The narrative increasingly focuses on a most profound turmoil of emotions raging through both protagonists. Mauritius is full of disbelief that his lady could act that way, and she is furious at the assumption by her lover and the maid that love is supposed to force her to accept him after all. Basically, the conflict comes to a head, with the erotic sentiment being destroyed altogether. Once Mauritius has learned from the maid what his mistress has told her, he feels deep despair and is ready to die, unless he can at least find a resolution satisfactory to himself, even if it would result in the total destruction of the affair (1517). Next he decides to enter the bedroom himself and to confront his lady with all the force available to him.

In other words, Mauritius has become desperate and begins to act recklessly, almost in an infantile manner, telling himself that he had done nothing wrong, and then he encourages himself to enter the bedroom and to inquire about his alleged fault (1523–24). For the first time he sees himself in a confrontation with the couple, and no longer the countess by herself. The issue does not deal anymore with the question whether she loves him or not, but whether she might have had any justified reason to break their contract. In other words, for him this situation no longer concerns love, but personal fault, or rather insult, failed commitment, and a denied reward, that is, an incomplete and one-sided exchange of promises and gifts.

But Mauritius does not knock on the door, and he does not ask for permission to enter; instead he pushes against the door until it breaks open (1525–27).⁴⁸ If that were not uncalled for, as the narrator himself implies through this description and

⁴⁸ In this regard, it seems inappropriate to characterize the entire scene as a ‘burlesque,’ as Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 201, identifies it. After all, irrespective of all efforts to defend Mauritius, his violent entrance into the marital bedroom constitutes a serious perpetration, and, disregarding the short *fablel* where the knight also enters the bedroom using force, medieval poets otherwise never included any similar scene because there is no parallel figure to Mauritius.

particularly the following comments, then Mauritius's appearance adds another dimension. He had arrived at the meeting point without any preparation for his lady and is still covered with his blood and sweat, making the impression as if he were a lion who has just finished its meal (1535–37). Ironically, however, this knight is only bloody from the battles with his opponents during the tournament, and he has not yet enjoyed his meal. So the blood only indicates the deep frustration that he had to go through and also the sexual hunger that he is coping with. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the lion still works exceedingly well, even though in a reverse order because Mauritius is ready to ravage his victim and does not care about any price that he might have to pay for his prey.

The first prey, however, proves to be not the lady, but her husband. The count is raked with deep feelings of guilt over the death of the knight whom he himself had killed during the tournament. So, when he wakes up from his light and troubled sleep, he gets terribly frightened and is immediately convinced of the truth that the ghastly appearance is telling him as an explanation for its arrival, namely that he is the ghost of the dead man. This seems particularly believable because, as we now also learn, not only does Mauritius look terribly bloody, but his entire outfit is cut and beat up, also displaying terrifying signs of the battle he had been involved in (1537–39). To emphasize the terror that he creates in this nightly bedroom scene, one of his metal leggings is clanking on the floor (1549–51). The poor count is first speechless and totally frightened, believing that either the devil or the wild army of ghosts has arrived. He cannot even utter a blessing to defend himself as a Christian (1554); but his screaming wakes up his wife who immediately recognizes Mauritius (1567), without revealing his identity to her husband. But the former then plays a devilish game and pretends to be the very ghost the count is so afraid of, which indeed frightens him so much that he jumps out of the bed and tries to run away. Depending on the perspective, he fortunately or unfortunately hits his shin (or chin, as the text in the manuscript might also indicate) and faints from the pain for the rest of the night (1578–80).

This finally clears the path for Mauritius to approach his real goal. Remarkably, however, contrary to his original intention, he does no longer ask for forgiveness from his lady, and also does not inquire what his own fault might have been motivating her to abandon him. Instead, the protagonist simply uses the opportunity that he has created with his ghostly appearance and lies down in the bed next to his lady, pretending that he does not know whose place it might have been originally, claiming instead that he would be in need of rest (1585–86). The narrator has no other words available but to comment: "daz was ein michel wunder" (1588; this was a most astonishing thing).

Worth noting would also be that the lady does not criticize him or protest his arrival. Instead, she only utters the highly ambiguous words: "'ir sît der kûeneste man, / des ich ie kunde gewan . . .'" (1595–96; you are the boldest man of whom

I have ever heard). Does she mean that she feels impressed by his daring move? Does she want to say that his behavior is uncalled for and most reprehensible. Or does she mean that she is afraid for her chastity? The narrator only emphasizes that she was in a particularly bad situation because she does not even know whether her husband is dead or alive (1589–90). Not to forget, he also characterizes this situation as “dirre nôt” for her (1589; this danger, or emergency), expressing, even if only tentatively so, his sympathy and concern for her well-being.

To make matters even worse, she naively complains about him not having asked for permission to do what he has done: ““. . . ir hât niht gevârget, / obe ich ez wolde oder niht” (1598–99; “. . . you did not ask me whether I wanted it or not). Again, we are forced to ponder whether she accuses him of breaking her trust and committing a violent transgression as lover, or whether she only voices her astonishment, perhaps even a subtle form of admiration for his manly deed. One aspect is for certain, as she also states unmistakably, “ich wæne, ein wunder hie geschiht” (1600; I think, a most extraordinary thing is happening here), which people from then on would talk about until the end of time, as if she were also reflecting upon the poet’s own expectations to be successful. It is also important to consider that the Countess of Beaumont here refers to the Day of Judgment: “biz der jüngeste tac betaget” (1602; until the Day of Judgment will begin), very similar to her husband’s assumption that the devil, an evil spirit, or one of the *benedanti* might have arrived to take him down to Hell.⁴⁹ Both figures operate on the level of a rather simplistic, perhaps also superstitious belief system, and respond somewhat emotionally and unreflectively to events in their lives.

This might actually explain the subsequent development because the countess considers herself caught in a most unfortunate situation in which she would not have any alternative but to submit under Mauritius’s wishes, which can only be, as she knows, sexual in nature:

si gedâhte: “ez ist kein rât,
sît ez sich sô gevüege hât:
ich muoz nû tuon unde lân,
swaz er mit mir wil begân.
nû lîde ichz guotliche,
daz im sîn zorn entwîche.” (1603–08)

[She thought by herself: “There is no choice,
since things have developed as they have:
I now must do and allow to happen
whatever he wants to do with me . . .

⁴⁹ Moreover, as Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 214, has observed, the reference to the Day of Judgment picks up her original comments about Mauritius’s ship when had arrived outside of the castle in preparation for the tournament.

I better endure showing a friendly mien
so that his wrath disappears.”]

Indeed, next she turns to him, hugging him, until he also warms up, and the rest is history which the narrator also does not want to discuss in detail (1615).

The crucial question upon which this entire chapter has been built then concerns whether she acquiesced to this sexual encounter voluntarily, or whether a certain degree of violence was involved (date rape). But we can first answer another, implied question, that is, whether Mauritius enjoyed the sexual union with her, or whether it only served as a catalyst for his empowerment and her subjugation under his control. There is no indication whatsoever regarding her emotional reaction to having to deal with the unwelcome lover, and yet she initiates, perhaps out of desperation, the sexual act. At any rate, subsequently Mauritius does not waste a minute and immediately gets up from bed as soon as orgasm has occurred, so it seems: “Ûf stuont der wîgant” (1621; the hero stood up).

The author’s choice of the word “wîgant” reveals a certain degree of irony because the term is borrowed from the world of heroic epics, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, or *Dietrichs Flucht*, and abruptly removes Mauritius from the world of refined courtly culture. In fact, this switch in the language code proves to be fitting insofar as he acts brutally and coldly toward the lady, pulling off the ring that she had granted him quite a while ago as a token of her love for him, returns it to her and castigates her for her ignorance, if not stupidity in matters of love: “. . . ir sît unverwizzen! . . .” (1627; you are foolish), signaling thereby that she has lost out badly.

He had served her untiringly and to the utmost of his abilities, and yet she had not accepted anything from him in return for a reward. As he emphasizes now, if all women behaved like her, he would never again enter a lady’s service in love (1632–33), which echoes the same concern voiced by the maid in defense of Mauritius while he had been asleep (1315–19). Scornfully he encourages her to take care of her husband who would need her help in his painful stage (1634), though this would not earn her any honor (1635). Finally, complaining bitterly about her behavior, he abandons her, paying her back in the same way as she had done to him before. Curiously, however, he resorts to the phrase “roup” (1637; robbery) and accuses her of having committed that crime against him to which he just a second ago has, though in a different meaning, referred as well as something he had suffered by her already: “. . . ich vergilte iu nimmer mære / disen lasterbæren roup” (1636–37; “. . . I will never forgive you this shameful robbery). Even though scholars hesitate to see violence at play here, that is, rape, there is no doubt that this sexual act is not based on love and proves to be void of all happiness. She submits under him, embraces him out of desperation, or helplessness, and he

finally responds because he wants to close the case, to receive his reward, and to get over with it for good.⁵⁰

In the concluding section, however, a travesty of the traditional dawn song, the countess experiences deep grief over the loss of her lover. Early in the morning she rises from bed, climbs to the top of the tower, and laments the disappearance of her knight. Nevertheless, we have to return to the critical moment at night in the marital bedroom and question once again what has happened there. Did she have a chance to say 'no' at all? Did she truly accept her lover in that situation happily and with her full volition? Did she enjoy any protection at that moment, with her husband having been knocked out and no one else nearby who could have helped her against this raging lion? Moreover, does it matter whether she was still emotionally attached to Mauritius in that critical moment or committed to him because of his accomplishments in the tournament that she had requested from him? Finally, would we be justified to draw a conclusion from the countess's later bemoaning of her fate to what she suffered at night previously, exposed to this violent man and completely helpless in that specific situation?

I believe that the answer to all these questions is a straightforward 'no,' which invites us to reconsider the extent to which we could identify the situation as 'date rape.'

It might be too legalistic and petty to claim that Mauritius brought the failure to stay awake during the appointed hour of meeting with his beloved upon himself. Altogether, he had exhausted himself excessively in preparation for the tournament and during the actual event, never taking any rest or considering the more specific expectations of his lady, readying himself, for instance, for the encounter with her (no bath, no cleaning up, no new clothes, etc.). But the crucial failure on his part consists of not accepting her 'no' in that concrete situation, as painful and disappointing as it might have been.

Curiously, this is the very outcome of the *fable* upon which the Middle High German poet probably based his own text, at least in part. There the knight, also playing the role of a ghost, only requests forgiveness from his lady for an unspeakable crime against her. The husband actually encourages her to do so out of pity for the ghost, which then allows the knight to disappear peacefully, having deeply impressed his lady through his boldness and courtliness at the same time. Consequently, these two later enjoy their love with each other because of his extraordinarily skillful handling of the situation, playing his role exceedingly well and placing the guilt upon himself instead of upon her.

⁵⁰ Barth, *Liebe und Ehe*, 1970, 152; Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 215–17. It seems incomprehensible that he perceives in this brutal scene nothing but a burlesque travesty of the traditional courtly love scene because the principles of gift-giving and love service have been broken by the lady, as if she carried all the responsibility and hence all the guilt (217).

In *Mauritius*, the conditions prove to be the very opposite. Mauritius regards her as the culprit and wants to punish her, but not without first forcing her to turn over her reward in sexual terms. So they both sleep with each other, but neither of them experiences any happiness; instead both are deeply wounded psychologically, even if we do not hear much about Mauritius's future escapades as a knight and lover, except that he is earning much public praise and honor for his knighthood (1642–43). Blame for the utter failure of this love affair can be assigned to both, in fact, but the final encounter in the bedroom still represents the ultimate transgression and perversion of courtly love.

The lady has no chance, she can no longer say 'no,' and she has to submit to the knight's demands. Of course, she is the first to embrace him, perhaps signaling her willingness to cooperate and to appease him, but in reality she is only trying to avoid a violent treatment at his hands, so she takes the path of the least resistance.

Ultimately, however, whether we like her or not, whether we might find her guilty in some sense or not, the narrative unmistakably is predicated on the experience of a date rape. In fact, the more she blames herself after the fact of having failed to uphold her end of the bargain—how can 'bargain' play any role in matters of love in the first place?—the more we get a sense that she is substituting feelings of embarrassment, shame, and hostility for having been sexually violated by Mauritius with feelings of guilt of having committed a crime herself. In other words, she perfectly fits the model of a date rape victim.⁵¹

To repeat and expand this notion, the Countess of Beamont becomes a victim in this situation, irrespective how much she might bemoan her own wrong behavior in the previous situation and irrespective of her guilt in not granting Mauritius the expected erotic experience because he had fallen asleep. After all, the entire verse novella is filled with clear evidence that speaks a most negative language about Mauritius who emerges as a rather rash, irrational, inconsiderate, perhaps even a brutal man. He seems to know the basics of courtly behavior and love, but in the end, when things do not go the way he had prepared and organized them, that is, when he experiences disappointment, he resorts to violence and takes what he believes is owed to him. That, however, constitutes date rape, and he emerges, despite all the praise that he earns later, as a sexual criminal because he could not accept her 'no,' irrespective of all mitigating circumstances. Surprisingly, the narrative, certainly written from a male perspective, as the final condemnation of the countess indicates, does not keep silent about this gross and violent transgression and puts the finger clearly on this wound, as it also undermines all of courtly society in its pretenses based on the traditional values of courtly love.

Neither the countess nor Mauritius emerges as sympathetic figures, especially because both are characterized by severe flaws in their personality. More

⁵¹ Bennewitz, "Lukretia," 1989, 132–33.

importantly, however, their own shortcomings do not only result in this date rape, but they also shed significant light on the aristocratic world of their time in which traditional courtly love could be travestied so grossly into sexual violence among closely related, emotionally mutually attached people. Although Hubertus Fischer argues forcefully in defense of the knight, who, according to his reading, fully deserved to be rewarded for all his service and his tireless efforts to win his lady's love, especially after her promise to be available for him after the tournament, ultimately the lady still suffers from her victimization.⁵² Certainly, at the end the countess grieves over the loss of her lover, and she wishes for his return, which is impossible because of her harsh behavior during Mauritius's sleep and her refusal to listen to his subsequent pleading. Moreover, the lady is punished for having failed to live up to the expectations of courtly society based on the principles of service and reward, even though she is still married. Nevertheless, her experience in the bedroom must be interpreted as rape because sexual favors cannot be granted under duress. We can agree with Fischer that the entire narrative is predicated on the "Modell vorbildlicher Lohngewährung" (model of ideal granting of rewards),⁵³ especially when we consider that the lady is the bitter loser. Nevertheless, as a truly courtly lover Mauritius would not have pursued his last strategy and would not have forced the countess to sleep with him. There is no other word for it, he rapes her. Medieval audiences might have disagreed, and perhaps the anonymous poet would also have seen it differently, but the textual development speaks an unmistakable language, whether the lady expresses regret later or not.

This is not to say that we would have to exculpate her for the rude behavior in the meeting place with Mauritius sleeping in the lap of the chambermaid. In fact, in the final scene the lady addresses the audience and reprimands the women among them not to follow her own example. In other words, this rape would have been avoidable, especially since Mauritius loved her and she would have truly enjoyed his passion, considering that she had accepted him as her *amî*, as documented by the ring that she had given him as a gift. But Mauritius also had a choice, yet he took the wrong path. Although he subsequently seems to enjoy public reputation as a knight, and might even be loved by the ladies far and wide, though the text does not say anything about that, his performance in the marital bedroom also speaks a clear language that does not simply disappear behind the countess's expression of regret at the end over her own behavior. In fact, any lady who later might not be willing to succumb to his wooing quickly enough might also be raped, as the narrative, at least indirectly, implies as well because of his

⁵² Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 220–22.

⁵³ Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 220.

unrealistic expectations resulting from his investments in the ship and the tournament.

Mauritius von Craûn might be an exemplary tale for lovers what to avoid and how to respond to the needs and requests expressed by each individual,⁵⁴ perhaps influenced by the teachings of Andreas Capellanus (*De amore*) despite, or just because of, the dialectical solutions offered in the dialogues between men and women.⁵⁵ But this Middle High German verse narrative also addresses specifically the danger of date rape resulting from a variety of conditions, some of which might also have been brought about by the woman. Despite the narrator's many efforts to defend the knight's attitude and actions, both during the tournament and afterwards with respect to his beloved, this male protagonist emerges as a rather ambiguous, uncontrollable, untrustworthy, certainly also dangerous character who is willing to risk everything in his life to achieve his goals with the countess, and yet does not understand the basics of human communication and love.⁵⁶ Did he truly love the lady, or did he intend to conquer her by means of his ship? Once he cannot accomplish this anymore peacefully, he turns to violence and takes what he believes belongs rightfully to him, thus making her, irrespective of the contractual agreement, to his sexual object that has to be available to him at any cost.

Ultimately, then, we might be fully justified to accuse Mauritius as a culprit of date rape. Moreover, despite his best efforts he destroys all principles of courtly culture and thus undermines the foundation of courtly love because he can only think of his own sexual desires and the reward for his massive material investment. Altogether, although located in the late Middle Ages, this verse narrative addresses the topic of date rape in a most fascinating fashion, presenting both sides in radical terms and forcing us to reflect deeply about the conditions that lead to this kind of crime. As we will see in the following chapter, later authors of *mæren* picked up this topic as well and adapted it for their own concerns, mirroring, however, changing social and historical conditions.

⁵⁴ This, at least, represents the final analysis by Fischer, *Ritter*, 2006, 238.

⁵⁵ Allen, *The Art of Love*, 1992, 59–78; Browne, *Contrary Things*, 1998, 91–115; Classen, "Epistemology," 2002, 341–62.

⁵⁶ Bulang, "Aporien," 2001, 207–29.

Chapter 4

Rape in Medieval Romance, with a Focus on Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*

To continue with our investigation of how rape was viewed in our text corpus, let us quickly review, once again, where we stand in terms of scholarship on this topic. Whereas rape as a theme in medieval French literature has already received considerable attention,¹ and so also in medieval and Renaissance English literature,² medieval German literature has not yet been adequately viewed in light of this sexual crime, if we disregard a number of short articles and brief comments. This might come even more as a surprise if we consider the relatively large number of critical studies focused on sexual transgressions and sexual crimes in the Middle Ages.³ In the present chapter I want to focus on one major case where a male character attempts to rape a woman if the male protagonist would not have intervened in the last minute and prevented the ghastly deed through his chivalrous performance.

Also as a recap, where and when did medieval German authors discuss the problem of rape? References to rape occur in a variety of literary genres, whether we think of the Indian princess in the goliardic epic *Herzog Ernst* (ms. A ca. 1170/1180; ms. B ca. 1220/1230), who tragically dies when the Bavarian Duke Ernst attempts to rescue her from her kidnapper and rapist, the king of the Grippians, a crane people,⁴ or whether we take into consideration Wolfram von Eschenbach's

¹ Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 1991.

² Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, 2001; *Representing Rape*, 2001. See also the contributions to *Violence Against Women*, 1998. As in most other cases, the cases studied here were all drawn from the world of medieval *Latinitas*, Middle English literature, and Old French literature. See also Swärd, *Rape and Religion*, 2003.

³ Leguay, "Ein Fall von Notzucht," 1992, 11–29 and 137–38.

⁴ Since the Grippian king is, like all his people, a crane person, he only operates with his beak, which he pushes into the mouth of the princess when he wants to kiss her (v. 3244), which proves to be most unpleasant, if not violent, to her. But later, once Duke Ernst and his companion Wentzel have been discovered, all the king's companions immediately use their beaks to stab the princess and kill her thereby, which we might identify as the ultimate and perverted form of gang rape. The two protagonists rush out of their hiding place and begin their slaughter, but they

Parzival (ca. 1205). There Gawain has to deal with the erstwhile rapist Urjans and is made a fool by him at first, until the former overcomes his opponent. The actual rape is mentioned only in passing as a most condemnable event that had happened in the past, although the protagonist still has to struggle hard to defeat the criminal knight, now having been liberated from his prison and seeking revenge of Gawain who had brought him to trial in the first place.⁵

As I have demonstrated in a previous chapter, in the anonymous *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200) the Icelandic queen Brunhild is certainly raped by Siegfried, whether actual penetration takes place or not. After he has squashed her by brute force and has taken away her ring and belt, thereby “readying” her as the willing and submissive wife of the Burgundian King Gunther, he leaves the bedroom and turns over the two most symbolic objects of his ‘sexual’ victory to his own wife Kriemhild. Tragically for the further development of the heroic epic, she later displays them in public in front of the church where she is fighting with Brunhild over their respective political superiority within the hierarchy of heroic society, explicitly telling her that her own husband Siegfried had first slept with the queen and taken her maidenhood by force (rape). This enrages and grieves Brunhild bitterly, and when Hagen witnesses this he utilizes his queen’s tears as the official legitimization to murder Siegfried on behalf of the Burgundian court.⁶

In Arthurian romance we are normally not told of specific rape scenes, but many times women’s freedom is violated and they are threatened by hostile knights who want to take them with them as their brides against their will (Enite in Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec*, see my chapter above). Although actual sexual transgression normally does not seem to enter the narrative world of chivalry, it certainly lurks in the shadows wherever we turn in Middle High German literature and then read carefully between the lines. In this regard, our corpus of texts does not prove to be exceptional at all, although specific aspects in men’s violent behavior against women still deserve close attention because they shed important light on the cultural characteristics of medieval Germany in peculiar ways.

In Heinrich von dem Türlin’s quirky and most unusual Arthurian romance *Diu Crône* (The Crown), Sir Gawain becomes the surprise witness of a rape attempt and immediately accepts his responsibility to help the victim in this dangerous situation according to the ethical ideals of courtly society. *Diu Crône* is a massive work consisting of slightly more than 30,000 verses, composed sometime around 1230 by an Austrian-Bavarian poet (perhaps originating from Styria) about whom

cannot prevent the princess’s death. *Herzog Ernst*, 1979. For a study of the iconography of the crane people from late antiquity to the seventeenth century, see Brunner, “Der König,” 2008, 21–37.

⁵ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, 1998, Book 521–Book 529. See Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, 1991.

⁶ See my detailed discussion of the rape scene in the *Nibelungenlied* in the second chapter.

we know very little apart from what he tells us about himself in the romance and what he indicates by way of literary-historical allusions. Heinrich strove to create a patchwork of the widest range of narrative motifs culled from traditional courtly literature, which also led him to investigate some of the most egregious transgressions of courtly love, that is, rape.⁷ Two major thematic aspects determine this romance and make it stand out among the numerous contemporary late-medieval Arthurian narratives. First, the court of King Arthur is challenged by an outsider to demonstrate its chastity, which provides an opportunity for a lengthy test of each individual member by means of a tankard.⁸ The other aspect consists of numerous phenomena, so-called *Wunderketten*,⁹ attentively but helplessly observed by a baffled Gawein who does not know how to make sense out of them. They seem to be inspired by visions of Hell, such as those projected in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, or in any contemporary image of the Day of Judgment (see the frescoes in the church Collegiata di San Gimignano, Tuscany), and prove to be highly imaginative and creative, though they escape an easy interpretation.¹⁰ In between, however, the court of King Arthur is also challenged by individual knights, and the central female figure, the queen, almost becomes the victim of rape. Certainly, there are many elements borrowed from the world of the fairy tale, as it seems, but drastic, bitter, dangerous, and even deadly reality intervenes repeatedly, as Gasozein's attempted rape of Queen Gynever indicates.¹¹

As to be expected, Gawein intervenes and saves the female protagonist, Queen Gynever, from her rapist, the curious, perhaps even liminal, knight Gasozein who at the end does not even seem to be unsympathetic. However, subsequently Gawein has to fight against his opponent whom he barely defeats. He finally appeases him only by offering him a pledge to joust with him later once both would have recovered their health and strength.¹²

Even though the wealth of literary allusions and intertextual references in *Diu Crône*, then the complexity of structural aspects and thematic elements have been

⁷ Cited from Heinrich von dem Türlin, *Die Krone*, 2000 and 2005. The older edition, *Diu Crône von Heinrich von dem Türlin*, 1852/1966, has only historical value now.

⁸ Kasper, *Von miesen Rittersn*, 1995, 586–605.

⁹ Keller, *Diu Crône*, 1997.

¹⁰ Classen, "The Literary Puzzle," 1998, 111–28; id., "Humor," 2002, 59–91.

¹¹ For the fairy-tale motifs, see Wagner-Harken, *Märchenelemente*, 1995, 273–384. She correctly observes that the illusionary, or fictional character of *Diu Crône* is repeatedly, probably deliberately, undermined by the corruption affecting most of knighthood and hence by the failings of the entire court of King Arthur (384).

¹² For a recent and well-written introduction with critical perspectives, see Thomas, *Diu Crône*, 2002. For an older, more global interpretation, valuable in itself regarding its interpretative intentions, see Jilling, *Diu Crone*, 1980.

provocative enough to engender a plethora of critical studies,¹³ sexuality and, above all, sexual violence as they are mentioned here, have been ignored almost entirely,¹⁴ or, which is more common in traditional scholarship, they are simply observed without receiving further attention.¹⁵ Both the circumstances surrounding Queen Gynever and the false claim on her love by the knight Gasozein de Dragoz are truly unusual and do not find significant parallels or antecedents in Arthurian literature, although J. W. Thomas claims that the “chief sources for the Gasozein story were *Les enfances Gauvain*, Chrétien’s *Lancelot*, and *Lanzelet*.” Nevertheless, Thomas then also admits, “none of which are followed very closely.”¹⁶

Basically, Gasozein argues that Arthur had stolen Gynever from him because she had been his beloved long before his competitor had married her seven years ago. Many conflicts erupt over this blatant lie, but they also provide much interesting narrative material casting Arthur and some of his courtiers in a curious and novel light. Gasozein rides through a wintry forest without much clothing on, not feeling any cold because of his love for Gynever. The queen has heard about this marvel of manhood and scoffs at her husband when she sees him one day warming his hands at the fire after having spent the day hunting. Not sure of what to make of that criticism, which seems to question his very masculinity, Arthur goes looking

¹³ See, for instance, Schnyder, “Die Angst,” 2008, 193–204; Suerbaum, “‘Entrelacement’?,” 2005, 5–18; for a broad overview of the relevant research literature, see Wennerhold, *Späte mittelhochdeutsche Artusromane*, 2005; Albrecht Classen, “Self and Other,” 2004, 20–39; Thomas, “‘Siner tugende aneenge sagen’,” 2000, 744–63; Classen, “The Literary Puzzle,” 1998, 111–28.

¹⁴ I am aware of only one, though not far-reaching study of this rape scene: Samples, “The Rape of Ginover,” 1995, 196–205. She argues that Heinrich perceived this rape scene only as an extreme form of patriarchal misogyny; hence the rapist’s attempt to gain sexual power over Gynever seems to be nothing but an alternative form of love seen from the male perspective: “An essential component of both stages in the rape is the objectification of Ginover. This technique functions primarily to shift attention away from the victimization of Ginover. Ginover appears no longer as a courtly lady, but rather as a series of objects” (199). This seems to be a bit too feminist, but certainly not satisfactory, reading. Samples suggests that a typically male perspective pursued by Heinrich von dem Türlin shines through in the evaluation of this attempted rape which would not seem to perturb the narrator much, at least according to this reading. This would imply that the female victim falls into the same category as peasant women who were regularly regarded as appropriate sex objects if we think of the numerous poets of pastourelles, or of Andreas Capellanus in his discussion of the rules of love in his *De amore*. The problem with this argument proves to be, however, that Gynever is a queen, that she adamantly fights against her sexual violation, and that the narrator severely condemns this horrible situation. The topic of sexuality has been comprehensively covered by the contributors to *Sexuality in the Middle Ages*, 2008. Rape is the topic in many of the contributions; Heinrich von dem Türlin’s *Crône*, however, is not mentioned there.

¹⁵ Bleumer, *Die ‘Crône’*, 1997, 41–42, who focuses only on the constellation of the individual figures and ignores the development of the plot because, as he states, the narrative development is, by itself, too deeply marred by logical inconsistencies and lack of actions on the part of the court.

¹⁶ J. W. Thomas, “Introduction,” xxiii.

for the stranger, who soon enough overpowers his three companions one by one. At last Gasozein fights against the king, against whom he actually might be at the risk of losing his life but the two finally engage in a conversation which reveals that the former had been looking for King Arthur who holds his own beloved prisoner. Gasozein claims that "Div mir wart bescheiden / Von den nahtweiden, / Do si erst wart geboren" (4839–41; "she was assigned to me at her birth by the night spirits," 55),¹⁷ and, trying to protect his honor: "Wan ir minne gab si mir / In der ersten stunde, / Do si reden begunde. / Des het si lang willen vor. / Do volendet ez Amor" (4949–53; "She pledged me her love as soon as she began to talk, for Amor long before had kindled in her the flame of love," 56).

As ridiculous as the entire attempt might be to rob Arthur of his own wife on this absurd claim, the king takes the charge more seriously than he really should and grants Gasozein to joust with him at a later day when both would be equally armored, insofar as Arthur also wants to protect his honor and makes every attempt at avoiding any action that might expose him to the possibility of being blamed for having killed a knight who wears only a shift whereas he himself is fully armored.¹⁸

The situation would not be so bad if Gynever had not mocked her husband regarding his lack of physical prowess, shivering from the cold, whereas the unnamed knight roams the wintry forest undaunted by the external conditions (3408–15). Now, after having encountered the potential competitor for his wife's love, Arthur's heart is filled with bitterness and jealousy (5084–85), and so he is most anxious to fight it out with Gasozein later. However, the queen's wooer, though at that later point fully armored, refuses to joust with the king, arguing that it would be unworthy for men of their status (10757–63).

Instead he wants Gynever to decide the case by herself, putting enormous pressure on this poor woman who is supposed to reveal her personal feelings in public and thereby to determine the honor of the entire court and the country on the spot (10858–65). Later, however, in the rape scene, Gasozein takes the opposite approach and tries to force the queen to submit to his sexual wishes, which reveals his contradictory behavior, or rather, ultimately, his rapist mentality.¹⁹

¹⁷ All English translations will be taken from Thomas, *The Crown*, 1989. Insofar as he renders the text into prose, I will refer only to the page number in his text.

¹⁸ We encounter such a case in the *mære* "Friedrich von Antfurt," where the foolish knight almost dies from his wound that he had received in a joust and only recovers after a whole year. However, then his lady still refuses to grant him her love, and he abandons all his wooing after she has humiliated herself by wearing his bloody shirt in public during the church service. The narrative is contained in Jans Enikel's *Weltchronik*, composed sometime before 1272, in the section dealing with Emperor Frederick II, vv. 28205–532. For an online version, see <http://www.dunphy.de/ac/je/jehome.htm> (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011). The relevant secondary literature can be found there as well.

¹⁹ Bleumer, *Die 'Crône'*, 1997, 39.

Surprisingly, in the initial winter scene Arthur agrees to his opponent's proposal (10887–90), signaling his own insecurity as to Gynever's loyalty and his position as her husband. In fact, he indicates that he would accept her decision to abandon him and to accept Gasozein as her preferred partner, as if the institution of marriage had no meaning (10680–65). However, she is aghast at the king's doubting and the insinuations put forth by Gasozein, realizing that she has no male supporter at court, not even her own husband (11010–28). Her protest should have settled the matter altogether, and it clearly underscores how much the narrator really wants to pay credit to this strong female character. But the situation gets much worse for Gynever because she becomes a victim of her brother Count Gotegrin's rash behavior and general distrust of women. Rumors about the curious events at Arthur's court have reached him, and he immediately wants to learn the truth about it, riding forth and then hiding in a forest nearby. But his messenger only provides a highly ambiguous report about Gynever's response, making his lord believe that she had acted dishonorably. Entirely unreasonably, as the narrator indicates indirectly, the brother immediately decides to kill his sister in punishment for her alleged treachery, and he manages to kidnap her while Arthur is accompanying Gasozein for a short distance. The spy had observed the public setting involving Gynever and the two men, but he misread the situation and the queen's behavior, hence his false interpretation which only feeds to his lord Gotegrin's deep-seated misogyny (11081–88).

Full of rage Gotegrin brutally mistreats his sister and is about to slaughter her in the middle of the forest when Gasozein suddenly enters the stage, immediately attacking Gotegrin, throwing him to the ground and kidnapping Gynever in turn. Although he assures her of his love and respect and even promises her to make her his wife and queen companion (11329–32), he basically demands concrete payment from her and treats her as a sexual object that must obey his orders: “*. . . Jwern leip han ich iv gegeben, / Des sült ir mir wizzen danc / . . . Jch hand durch iwer minne / Her getragen chumbers vil. / Nv ist ez chomen an daz zil, / Daz mir geluke lonen wil*” (11333–44; “*. . . Since I saved your life, you owe me thanks. . . I have endured many hardships through love of you and at last the time has come when Fate wants to reward me,*” 127).

Although we have not yet examined the actual rape scene that is following next, metaphorically speaking the miserable queen has been raped already several times, being tossed around and abused by the various men at court, not even enjoying her most hesitant husband's defense, being threatened with death by her brother, and severely challenged by her most unwelcome lover. Whereas before Gasozein had insisted that he and Arthur should allow Gynever to make up her own mind, he is so sex-craved at this moment that he regards the situation in which he could get hold of the queen through a violent act with which he defeated her brother as a sign that destiny wants to reward him with her as his property.

In other words, here we can clearly observe the narrator's specific interest in exploring women's freedom to decide their own lives, the right of the male kin to that very privilege, and the extent to which a male wooer would be entitled to rob a woman from her husband's side to satisfy his own lust.

Gynever, however, explicitly rejects all those male assumptions and insists on her rights as an individual within courtly society to make up own mind whom she wants to love, and whose wife she wants to be:

“ . . . Wie het ich dann gechrenchet
 Aller weibe werdecheit,
 So ich iv des wær bereit,
 Daz ich meinen man liez
 Vnd mich also verstiez,
 Daz ich mit iv ze lande
 Mich auf sölh vnstæte wande,
 Daz ich iwer kebs müest wesen.
 So het ich vür daz golt gelesen
 Daz chupfer vnd den messinc.

 Jchn sol nimmer gemeilen,
 Wil got, weibes stæte,
 Wan swa ich missetæte,
 Daz wiz man allen weiben.
”

(11350–67)

[“ . . . What harm I would do to the honor of all women if I were ready to leave my husband and unfaithfully stray so far as to go home with you to be your mistress. I would be exchanging gold for copper and brass. . . . I shall never bring woman's constancy into ill repute, for all women would be accused of any mistakes I might commit,” 127].

She does not quiver in marital loyalty, despite some mocking remarks about her husband at the beginning of the romance. Moreover, although King Arthur himself seems to be an unsteady person, not knowing exactly how to assess his wife's commitment to and love for him, Gynever's comment here states her position unequivocally and should have been understood by Gasozein as an unmistakable rejection.

However, rather contrary to his previous stance toward women's freedom in terms of love, Gasozein now disregards all her words and pleading, and he adamantly demands to be rewarded for having rescued her from Count Gotegrin's clutches, explaining that he expects all courteous women to give up resistance to a man's wooing, especially under the current circumstances, if he has lived up to certain male expectations—clearly a perversion of the traditional concept of courtliness: “Wan muoz mir ledichleichen lan / Jwern leip, oder ich erstirbe . . .” (11389–90; “ . . . I shall die if they don't let me have you . . .,” 127). In other words,

he believes that he has sufficiently earned the prize, and if she is not willing to grant it to him, he is ready to force her into submission, particularly sexual. The parallels to Mauritius von Craûn in the eponymous verse narrative are striking (see the previous chapter).

Considering that the narrator brings to light all these psychological commotions, he lays out a very clear picture, indicating the extent to which Queen Gynever is truly abused and hence becomes subject to an attempt to rape her. In other words, Heinrich von dem Türlin presents a highly negative image of male behavior in the courtly world and severely warns his audience to abstain from that kind of action pursued by the queen's brother and her sex-crazed lover.

Gynever is clearly aware of the great danger she finds herself in, sensing Gasozein's overpowering physical passion for her and his irrational resolve to fulfill his sexual wishes irrespective of her resistance and explicit rejection. The narrator offers an amazingly insightful psychological reading of what might drive a man to rape a woman: "Nv was ouch nah ir minnen / Gasoein so starch we, / Daz si vorht, daz er e / In dem walde bei ir læg / Vnd ir über maht phlæg, / E er si so liez varn. / Ouch enchund si daz niht bewarn. / Wolt er sein niht han enborn, / Ir wer wær gar verlorn. / Ditz allez sei dar zuo twanc, / Daz si im da svnder danc / Muost volgen, wan sein bet / Was gebot, die er tet" (11428–40; "what she feared most was that Gasozein was so driven by passion for her that he would be more likely to rape her here in the forest than let her go. She knew she could not prevent it; if he did not choose to forego force, any defense would be hopeless. She was compelled to obey him against her will, since any request he made was a command," 128).

Indeed, the following section proves to be a remarkably detailed and perceptive description of the conditions that lead to rape, virtually unparalleled in medieval literature, whether we think of the genres of *pastourellas*, of *fabliaux*, or the allegorical romance (see the famous scene at the end of the *Roman de la rose* by Jean de Meun, ca. 1270/80). However, we have also to keep in mind that Heinrich von dem Türlin does not try at all to defend Gasozein, or any other male member of the court somehow involved in the entrapment of the queen, as Susan Samples has argued erroneously.²⁰ By contrast, the narrator emphasizes: "Des wil ich vür sie geswern, / Daz si im nimmer einen trit / Het von der stat gevolget mit, / Het er seis

²⁰ Samples, "The Rape of Ginover," 1995, 200: "Paradoxically, the siege imagery and language both accentuate and diminish the violence of the rape. As we have seen, the battle language strips away the romantic aura created by the earlier *minne* imagery Nonetheless, by likening rape to a siege, Heinrich legitimizes the violence, which clouds the issue of rape. Against such a battle setting, Gasozein's sexual assault now acquires the characteristics of a knightly adventure." Samples is correct in rejecting Jillings' reading of this scene: "In the course of this wooing the narrator provides a commentary upon the frailty of women and emphasizes the sincerity and ardour of Gasozein's passion." ("The Abduction," 1977, 27).

niht betwungen" (11456–59; "I'll take an oath on the lady's behalf that she would never have followed the knight a single step from the place had he not forced her to do so," 128). This comment obviously served him to alert his audience to the truly violent nature of Gasozein's behavior, ultimately leading to his attempt to rape the queen. His statement might have been necessary, as he apparently felt, to defend Gynever against possible accusations of a lackluster opposition against her wooer. In other words, he is probing what his audience might think about a woman's chances to fend off a rape attempt, especially when she is alone, far away from the court and her husband.

In this regard we also have to correct Lewis Jillings's comment: "with not a word of blame for him and a perfunctory let-out for her; . . ." ²¹ In fact, the planned rape is presented to us in gruesome terms and there is no attempt by the narrator to disculpate the responsible knight. The narrator also refers to the ravishment of Helen by Paris, "Dar vmb man Troy brande" (11552; "which led to the burning of Troy," 129), indicating, as I have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, that rape was often regarded in antiquity and the Middle Ages as the root cause of a country's downfall. The dire consequences for the world of King Arthur would not be less damaging if Gynever would have been raped.

Not surprisingly in this specific context, the narrator here extends his discussion to similar situations and refers to many tales about people who have suffered in the past, referring to those who committed suicide or murder, to those who were subject to torture and revenge, then to those who experienced grief leading to death, and so forth, adding, however, that the news of Gynever's abduction and most likely rape by Gasozein, at least according to the report provided by Count Gotegrin who was brought back to Karidol Castle because he was badly wounded and hurt, create more grief than anything before. In other words, the realization that the queen would have to suffer this sexual crime shakes the foundation of King Arthur's court, though without anyone willing or able to do anything about it.

The scene then switches back to Gasozein who takes his lady into the middle of the forest where he wants to satisfy his lust with her. In a grotesque travesty of the traditional use of the *locus amoenus*, the site there, densely covered by leaves, making it impossible for outsiders to espy them, is falsely coded with the markers of love:

EJn schoeniv linde stuont da bei,
Div het manic schœnez zwei
Verre auf die heid gestrechet

²¹ Jillings, "The Abduction," 1977, 28. Only shortly later he reiterates and reemphasizes his conclusion along those lines: "Not a word of blame is directed at Gasozein; his love is depicted as natural; spontaneous, sincere" (30).

Vnd het da mit bedechet
 Der heid ein vil schœne stat.
 Vnd dirre schœnen linde schat²²
 Erbeizt er vnd div chûnigin.
 Div ôrs haft er von in hin
 An dirre linden este,
 Die dar zuo warn veste.
 Sein schilt er zuo sich hienc. (11629–39)

[“In the grove was a stately linden whose many fine branches reached far out over the heath and sheltered a beautiful spot. They dismounted in the shade of the tree, the knight tied the horses to two of its larger boughs at some distance from the lady, and hung his shield on his back,” 130].

Whereas in countless other literary examples the lovers voluntarily meet at such a location, far away from society, particularly under the famous linden tree which figures so prominently in Walther von der Vogelweide’s well-known song “Under der linden,”²³ whether at the edge of the forest or deep inside, here Gasozein has brought his lady to this location completely against her will and with the explicit intention to rape her. This *locus amœnus* proves to be the greatest travesty of courtly culture because it normally represents the space where lovers can hide from the rest of society to enjoy their love, almost like a utopia of love.²⁴ Here, by contrast, Gasozein wants to hide from society to rape his lady.

At first he tries to seduce her by physical manipulations: “Vnd sein hant vil ofte stiez, / Swa er moht, vnder ir gewant” (11642–43; “he put his hand under her dress, wherever he could” 130),²⁵ while she continues to fight him off and begs him to remember his knightly honor and oath of chivalric fidelity to defend women and other people in need. It becomes a battle of words against brutal actions since he insists that she allow him to touch her at least once: “Daz er wan ze einem male / Jr hvff mit seinen henden / Mit ir willen müeste wenden / Dar vnder ir chleider, / So tæet er ir niht leider” (11660–64; “feel her bare hip just once without waiting, saying that if she agreed, he would no nothing more,” 130). The wording, “hvff” (11661; “bare hip,” 130) can easily be translated into concrete language, meaning nothing else but her pudenda, for which there is plenty of evidence in contemporary courtly love poetry and romance.²⁶

²² Again, ms. P has certainly the only correct reading: “Vnder dirre. . .” (Under this . . .).

²³ Walther von der Vogelweide, 1996, no. 16, p. 77–78. Walther elaborates the *locus amœnus* delicately, closely associating it with the linden tree: “‘Under der linden / an der heide, / dâ unser zweier bette was . . .’” (I, 1–3).

²⁴ On the topic of utopias in the Middle Ages and the relevant research literature, see Hartmann, “Utopias/Utopian Thought,” forthcoming.

²⁵ I have modified the translation slightly to stay closer to the original.

²⁶ Zeyen, *daz tet der liebe dorn*, 1996, discusses the equivalent expression, “Der ‘freche Griff’ (185–89; the bold groping); for further evidence drawn from late-medieval Shrovetide plays, see

But we would not need to go so far to find corroboration for this reading because the context here is self-evident. As soon as she has granted him that 'small' favor, not knowing what else to do in this situation of blackmail, the fury of his sexual passion breaks loose: "Vor lieb spranch er an div knie. / Vil snelle er sein hende lie / An beide hvff vnd ir gewant. / Als er ir leibes enphant, / Do muost ez wesen ane vride, / Wan minne chras von lide ze lide / Vnd began in gar enzündē. / Daz chvnd ouch geschünden / Daz chüssen vnd ir süezer leip" (11705–13; "he rose lustfully to his knees and turned his hands loose on both her bare hips. Once he had felt her body, there could be no truce, because love's fire crept from member to member until he burned from head to toe; the kisses and the sight of her charming form also fed the flames," 131).

In an interesting parallel to, or rather anticipation by several decades, the second part of the Old French *Roman de la rose* by Jean de Meun (ca. 1260/1270; the first part composed by Guillaume de Lorris ca. 1220/1230), the entire setting is compared to the siege of a castle and the resulting problem for those within the fortress who naively allow the enemy to enter the city temporarily: "Gynever niht bechande, / Daz ein burch wirt gewonnen, / So die burgær den veinden gunnen, / Daz si mit vrid hie vor / Auf sliezen div pürgtor / Vnd gehausen in daz hamit. / So ist bedenthalben ir streit / Verendet vil schiere. / Mit offener baniere / Die veint dringent dar in. / So scheinet dann ir vnsin. / Da enwirt vride noch suon" (11683–94; "Gynever did not know that a fortress is soon captured when those within peacefully open the gate before their adversaries and prepare quarters for them in the town below. Their strife will end quickly because the enemy will push in with banners flying and reveal the folly of the defenders; there will be no parley then," 130). The narrator seems to accuse Gynever of not having protected herself properly, but he quickly returns to defend her reasonably considering the circumstances: "Gynever wand daz beste tuon" (11695; "She did what seemed best," 130), and "Wan si in kumber wart geweten" (11700; "she had waded into trouble" (130).

Moreover, Gynever is completely helpless in this situation, and it would not have mattered whether she had tried to resist him more energetically or not at all: "Swie ez halt noch geschiht" (11718; "it would have ended in the same way," 131).²⁷ The narrator expresses his great pity with her victimization and explicitly develops a harsh condemnation of the crime that is about to happen here: rape! As the text informs us: "Solt si nv werden sein weib, / Da wær si doch vnschuldic an" (11714–15; "But if she is now to become his mistress, she will nevertheless be blameless," 131).

Müller, *Schwert und Scheide*, 1988.

²⁷ A better translation might be: as it usually happens.

The subsequent description might well be regarded as a form of pornography, considering that it constitutes only a thinly veiled description of the sexual act that is supposed to follow while he is touching her private parts: “Jn ir brüel zefuort er daz broz, / Daz mit blüete was entsprungen, / Wan er chom zuo gedrunge / Mit so grozzem gwalte, / Daz er sein vil valte, / Als ez div glust reizet” (11726–31; “He brought a sprig that had sprung up with blossoms into her bushy meadow and began to search for the castle, pressing forward with great force so that he could throw down as much of it as he wished,” 131). But Gynever holds out and still fights him with every means available to her, desperately trying to push Gasozein back, who is therefore attempting to gain access to her from a different angle: “Ouch was ez so in ir gewer, / Dar nach Gasoein streit, / Seit ez ir was so leit, / Daz si imz guot weil entseit. / Do im also niht gelanc, / Vnder ir bein er sich swanc / Vnd woltes so betwungen han” (11740–46; “Since that for which Gasozein strove was in her keeping and she struggled desperately, she was able to protect it from him for some time. As the one line of attack had failed, the knight swung himself under Gynever’s leg and tried to conquer her thus,” 131).

But this pornographic scene does not serve to excite sexual pleasure; on the contrary, the narrator specifically uses these graphic terms to underscore the violent nature of Gasozein’s attempts to achieve sexual gratification and Gynever’s helplessness in the desperate situation, explicitly characterized as the siege of a castle with catastrophic consequences for those behind the metaphorical walls.

There are many allusions to sexual violence in medieval literature, best known, probably, from the ending of the *Roman de la rose* (see above),²⁸ but this most drastic description of the two naked bodies seems to be unparalleled and reflects Heinrich von dem Türlin’s effort to utilize all and every element of traditional Arthurian and Grail romance for innovative, or rather transgressive, and shocking perspectives in his own text.²⁹ Both Wolfram von Eschenbach (*Parzival*) and Geoffrey Chaucer (*The Wife of Bath’s Tale*) incorporated only references to a rape that had happened in the past, but they then consistently refrained from describing the act itself in any specific terms. Here in *Diu Crône*, on the other hand, we are forced to look on and witness it in all details as Gasozein exposes both their

²⁸ Cahoon, “Raping the Rose,” 1986, 261–85; Allen, *The Art of Love*, 1992, 91–92. See also Huot, *The Romance of the Rose*, 1993, 44, 50, 62, 65, 141–42, 160–61, who discusses the numerous references to violence to gain a woman’s sexual favor. Kelly, *Internal Difference*, 1995, 9–10, emphasizes that references to rape are part of the broader attempt by the author to ambiguate his text. “It also points to and reflects diverse audience responses to the Rose—the internal difference that makes the poem so compelling and exasperating.” See also Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, 1991, 68–69.

²⁹ It has often been observed how much Heinrich von dem Türlin culled his literary material from his predecessors; see Thomas, trans., xxiii, but the critical treatment of rape seems to be Heinrich’s particular contribution.

bodies and tries to overpower the queen sexually and to penetrate her body against her will.³⁰

At that moment, however, Gawein arrives by accident deeply shocked at what he is witnessing. The situation might not be as clear at first sight because he observes simply a man and a woman in a seemingly erotic embrace, but he also notices that she is sobbing and that Gasozein is wrestling with her violently, which unmistakably signals that the man is imposing his will upon a female victim. Gawein's reprimanding words speak a forceful language: "Ritter, waz ist dirre gewalt? / Wie wurt ir ie so vrowen balt, / Oder wer lert ivch dise vnzuht, / Daz ir sölhes gewaltes frucht / An vrowen soldet wenden, / Da mit ir ivch schenden / Vnd sei vnd riters namen welt? . . ." (11760–66; "Knight, what do you mean by this? How did you ever get so brave with women? And who taught you to be crude enough to use force against them, bringing shame on them, yourself, and knighthood? . . .," 131).

Although the two men hurl insults at each other, Gawein first inquires of the lady how he is to interpret the situation, whether she is there by her own free will or not, that is, whether the knight is her lover or not, still granting a credit of doubt because he might misread everything. When he approaches the couple under the linden tree, Gynever covers herself up in embarrassment, obviously because Gasozein had ripped off her clothing in his attempt to rape her. She relates everything that has happened to her to the rescuer Gawein and, fortunately, finds an attentive listener in him who immediately pledges to protect her honor both here and later in the presence of her husband because he realizes how much she has been made into a victim of male abuses. Fundamentally, Gawein understands that his opponent had tried to rape the queen, and he harshly condemns this, coming to her rescue with all his power available to him.

Curiously, in the subsequent scene, carefully veiled by the author, an odd substitute of male (sexual?) violence takes place with a lot of blood shedding far beyond the normal situation in medieval jousting. Gasozein does not voluntarily give up his plans and foams at his mouth, so to speak, for having failed in his manhood while trying to rape his beloved and for being belittled by the male competitor who has interrupted his desperate attempt to overpower Gynever physically.³¹ The two men furiously throw themselves at each other and engage in a desperate battle in which each tries to kill the other, although they still aim to maintain their honor and treat each other with chivalrous honor. To speculate a little here, we might even assume that in their fight they receive such deep

³⁰ For a broad discussion of the gaze, optics, and visual aspects, especially in Jean de Meun's part of the *Roman de la rose*, see Akbari, *Seeing*, 2004, 78–109. She does not, however, touch upon the problem of rape.

³¹ Indeed, the wide spectrum of masculinity finds powerful reflection here, a topic that has attracted much research recently; see Pigg, "Masculinity Studies," 2010.

wounds that might symbolically represent the wound that Gasozein had wanted to cause on Gynever in sexual terms: "Jetweder da besunder / Drei weit tief wunden, / Daz daz pluot in starchen vnden / Dar auz grimmechleichen brach / Vnd began rinnen als ein bach" (11920–25; "To be sure, both received three long, deep wounds from which blood gushed forth frightfully and flowed down like a mountain stream, which made the knights much weaker," 133). Let us examine this further.

Although the two knights take a break from time to time, and although Gynever makes her best efforts to intervene and establish a truce between them, the enmity between them runs so deeply that they cannot refrain from continuing their fierce battle despite heavy loss of blood and utter physical exhaustion (11972–79).³²

In an absurd twist of further events, Gasozein slays his horse as punishment for his own falling off its back while his beloved lady had looked on. Gawein immediately follows suit and kills his own steed so as to be, literally, on an equal footing with him. But the fight continues, and the two men lose more and more of their strength, and finally both fall to the ground and faint.

The desperate Gynever tries to resuscitate them and looks for water, but since she has no cup to hold it, "Wol halben ir stouchen / – Wan sis niht moht gelouchen / In der hant noch besliezen, / Si vorht ez vergiezen – / Vnd besprancht ir antlütze" (12072–76; "Since she couldn't carry it in her hands and was afraid of spilling it if she tried, she dipped her sleeves in up to the elbows and, returning, sprinkled their faces," 134), a most curious symbolic gesture of giving life, perhaps also carrying a religious, if not even an erotic meaning considering the common use of the sleeve as a love object usually handed over to the man as a sign that the lady is welcoming his wooing.³³

Most puzzling, in Jewish sources reflecting the horrendous pogroms in the wake of the First Crusade in Mainz (1096), we also hear of sleeves that a mother, Rachel, wife of Rabbi Judah, uses to receive the blood of her own children that she had slaughtered before the Christian mob entered and committed their murderous deed: "The mother spread her sleeve to receive the blood; she received the blood

³² Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, 2006, though never mentioning Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*, insightfully comments, 69–70: "bleeding meant a danger to the conception of the body as always enclosed. It had to be made clear that any bleeding was a terrible threat, that any transgression of the rigid boundaries was just that – a transgression." It would be misleading, at least in our context, to claim that "Blood pollutes men" (96). Bildhauer is certainly correct in her overall argument that blood carries an epistemological function, but here, in Heinrich's romance, it certainly also indicates a most curious blending of sex identities via shedding of blood. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 2007, discusses blood mostly from a theological perspective, which has no bearing on the battle scene in *Diu Crône* either. See also the contributions to *Blood in History and Blood History*, 2005, though here blood is mostly discussed in light of medical history.

³³ Brüggen, *Kleidung und Mode*, 1989, 252–53, lists the relevant passages in Middle High German courtly romances.

in her sleeves instead of in the [Temple] vessel for blood." Once all four children were dead, she "placed them under her two sleeves, two on each side, near her heart." When the enemy broke through the door, they suspected her of hiding her wealth in her sleeves: "'Show us the moneys which you have in your sleeves.' When they saw the children and saw that they were slaughtered, they smote her and killed her along with them."³⁴ Otherwise, sleeves do not assume any particularly symbolic role in medieval literature, as far as I can tell.³⁵

Although it would be impossible to claim that Heinrich von dem Türlin might have been familiar with this Jewish source, which actually seems far-fetched considering the differences in languages and contexts, we still can observe remarkable parallels between, on the one hand, Gynever's use of her sleeves to drench the faces of the two knights with water to rejuvenate them, and on the other, Rachel's use of her sleeves to receive the blood of her children, a symbol of earthly death and yet also a symbol of spiritual resurrection. The sleeves are wide enough to hide the four dead children, and they are good enough as vessels to soak up the blood. Similarly, Gynever effectively uses her sleeves to carry sufficient water to revive the two knights.

Considering all the blood that Gawein and Gasozein spill in their bitter jousting, the image of the sleeve here utilized to carry water acquires considerably symbolic meaning, especially because Gynever then appeals to them ardently to abstain from any further fighting which would not help them to gain any honor; on the contrary, "Ez möht in bringen sölhen schaden, / Dens niht möhten ab gebaden" (12093–94; "it could do them harm that they could never wash away," 135).

Surprisingly, however, none of her words has any effect, and the two knights immediately return to fighting as soon as they realize that their swords are broken. This time, however, they resort to wrestling and try to overcome the opponent with all their remaining strength, straining themselves to the utmost in their physical might, getting as close to each other in bodily terms as possible, as if they were carrying out the sexual act that Gasozein had tried to realize with Gynever. But again they collapse, and fall asleep.

To stretch the comparison with the Hebrew source to a breaking point, Rachel can only use her sleeves to place the bodies of her four dead children inside, and Gynever fails, if that proves to be a point of comparison indeed, to prevent the knights from their deadly battle despite the life-giving qualities of the water that she had carried in and with the sleeves.

³⁴ Quoted from the appendix in Chazan, *European Jewry*, 1987, 258–59.

³⁵ See, however, *Tristan als Mönch*, 1994, v. 1880. I had translated the term 'stuchen' as handkerchief, but in light of our passage in *Diu Crône*, it would make more sense to read it as 'sleeve.' There are a number of references to sleeves in Middle High German literature, but then there is no reference to blood and death, as in our context.

Curiously, Gawein then dreams of a wild boar that viciously attacks him and inflicts many wounds on him “Des gewan er michel arebeit. / Wan ez im manig wunden sneit / Mit einem zan, der was scharf, / Vntz er mit einem spiez warf, / Durch ez, daz ez tot gelac” (12160–64; “This caused him much distress, for it gave him many wounds with its sharp tusks before he killed it with his spear,” 135). This might well be an evocation of the wild boar Marjodo had dreamt of in Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan* (1210), just minutes before waking up and realizing that the footsteps that he subsequently discovers outside in the snow are Tristan’s and lead directly to the women’s quarter where his friend is committing adultery with the king’s wife.³⁶ In Marjodos dream the boar enters the royal palace, rushes up to the king’s chamber, breaks through the door and throws itself on his bed, soiling all the sheets with its froth (“mit sînem schûme solget er / daz bette und al die bettewât,” 13532–33), an obvious allusion to the act of adultery and, even worse, to Tristan’s spilling of semen, which underscores the ardent sexual desire on the part of Marjodoc who probably knows nothing of love but longs for Isolde only in physical terms.³⁷ Moreover, in many medieval nightmares the outcome of a battle or a conflict finds anticipatory expression in the appearance of a boar, a highly symbolic animal representing the devil or some of the seven deadly sins,³⁸ which finds confirmation in Gawein’s lucid words with which he explains his dream.³⁹ However, such an explanation would not be enough, particularly because of the narrative framework here, Gasozein’s rape attempt. If he could overpower Gawein, he would immediately resume his violent actions against the queen; hence the dream requires further explanations.

In a most convoluted and yet intriguingly symbolic fashion, Heinrich von dem Türlin obviously wanted to allude to the motif of rape, but now refers to it, as I would like to suggest, even though it might sound somewhat far-fetched at first, as the rape of a male by another male in the form of revenge, or compensation for the failed rape of the woman. Apparently, the sexual wounding of the queen can only be overcome, according to this text, by inflicting wounds on the rapists and

³⁶ For further examination of the symbolic role of the boar, see McDonald, “The Boar Emblem,” 1991, 159–78.

³⁷ Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, 1981. In his commentary, Krohn explicitly underscores the sexual meaning of the boar metaphor, vol. 3, 136 (with further references there). Bekker, *Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan*, 1987, 196–203, cites most of the relevant studies on this dream, but rejects the common reading that the image of the boar refers to Tristan. Instead, as it is Marjodoc’s dream, the boar represents the dreamer’s own unfulfilled sexual desires: “Marjodoc’s dream has nothing to do with Tristan; it is, to say it again, Marjodoc’s. Whether, going beyond this fact, we should be ready to say that it is Mark’s as well depends on whether we are ready to declare Marjodoc to be a personification of Mark’s mind on this occasion with regard to Eros—a study on triads in *Tristan* would have it so.” (201).

³⁸ Sachs, Badstübner, and Neumann, *Wörterbuch*, 2005, 52–53.

³⁹ Speckenbach, “Der Eber,” 1975), 468; Bleumer, *Die ‘Crône’*, 1997, 49–50.

accepting wounds on the defender's body. This interpretation might work well especially when we think of the many wounds that Gawein suffers until he escapes from his own dream, laughing about it and dismissing its significance. But in that dream Gawein had to battle hard against the wild beast "Vnd began in starch vehthen an. / Des gewan er michel arebeit, / Wan ez im manig wunden sneit / Mit einem zan, der was scharf, / Vntz er mit einem spiez warf / Durch ez, daz ez tot gelac" (12159–64; "that fiercely attacked him. This caused him much distress, for it gave him many wounds with its sharp tusks before he killed it with his spear," 135). He laughs about the dream obviously out of a sense of deep relief, although he had overcome the beast. But still there was the great pain and the smell of blood which uncannily connects the dreamworld with the reality in which he has to fight against Gasozein for life and death to defend the queen against the latter's attempt to rape her.⁴⁰

Although Gawein has unmistakably defeated his opponent, who is lying on the floor still unconscious, and although Gynever now pleads with her hero to depart from this ghastly scene, and especially to leave the rapist behind,⁴¹ he refuses her request and insists on continuing fighting out of an odd sense of honor, fearing that he could be accused later of having run away from him. Comparing similar scenes in contemporary Arthurian romances, it would have been fully acceptable to abandon Gasozein and to return to the court, but there is a puzzling bond between these two men although they fight each other almost to death, based on honor, courtliness, bravery, and common interest in the same woman, though from different perspectives.

Gasozein had left behind the violent count Gotegrin, despite his severe injury, but the former had made that decision simply with the intention to have free access to the queen and finally to satisfy his sexual desires with her.⁴² This avenue is blocked for Gawein. In fact, he searches for weapons and wakes up Gasozein,

⁴⁰ The strong symbolism of the dream does not come as a surprise, considering the general interest in dreams in the Middle Ages; see Classen, "Transpositions," 1994, 109–20.

⁴¹ Stein, *Integration*, 2000, 225, claims that Gynever demonstrates sympathy for both men equally, i.e., both for the rapist and for Gawein. This interpretation cannot be maintained and clearly contradicts the text passage here. Certainly, the queen laments the seeming death of both men, but this has to be seen in light of her feeling of abandonment and also her full understanding of the value of knighthood and chivalry. There is no doubt that she wants to leave Gasozein behind. Kaminski, "*Wâ ez sich êrste ane vienc*," 2005, 172–73, offers a rather confusing, highly theoretical reading of this scene, particularly when she attempts to associate the relationship between Gasozein and Gynever with the one normally characterizing an erotic couple in the dawn-song setting, 207–12.

⁴² Kaminski, "*Wâ ez sich êrste ane vienc*," 2005, 207–10, offers interesting parallels in the evaluation of Gynever's request to depart from this location and to return home, but these are not necessarily the same, and the conclusion of her reading, that ambivalence determines the scene, leaves almost everything open

who then relates his own dream to them, which also carries a symbolic meaning. In this dream he was sailing on a river with the queen when a severe storm hit and forced him to seek shelter below the main deck. However, "Einem velsen kom wir nahen, / Da der kiel an getriben wart, / Daz er sich von einander zart. / Da gie ich in vnd ertranch. / Div chünigin sich auf swanch / Vnd chom oben auf den stein" (1233–38; the ship was driven to a rock and break apart. The queen scrambled up to the top of the rock, but I fell into the water and drowned, 136).⁴³

Both dreams imply a severe warning and carry somber meanings regarding life and death,⁴⁴ but the two knights dismiss them lightly; actually they misread them utterly and return to fighting until they faint once again, forcing the queen to resort to a most unusual rescue operation with her sleeves wiping away their bloodstains until they are rejuvenated: "Div chunigin gie aber dar. / Swa si warn iendert bluotvar, / Daz wischet si mit ir stauchen ab / Vnd het vil groz vngehab / Mit weinen vmb ir chriegen muot, / Wan auz ir wunden vloz daz bluot / Mit sölher vnmaze, / Daz der anger vnd div straze / Allez was mit al beströwet" (12257–65; "The queen went to them once more and washed away the bloodstains with her sleeves, weeping bitterly all the while because they could want to go on fighting when blood was flowing so freely from their wounds that the road and the field were covered with it," 136).

Uncannily, then, the association of sleeves with blood, as in the Jewish source, intensifies here, underscoring the function of sleeves to grant life and also to prevent death, perhaps even in a maternal sense, as we also find illustrated in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* where Enite wipes off blood and sweat on her husband's and the dwarf king Guivreiz's bodies.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, none of her efforts overcomes their stubbornness, if not utter lack of rationality because they continue to bicker over who can take the queen with him and do with her whatever they like. Gawein finally convinces Gasozein to accept his offer to return to King Arthur's castle Karidol to seek help and get medical treatment. He goes so far as to pledge: "'Wenn ir werdent gesunt / Vnd mir tünt den tag kunt, / Jch gewyn uch ros z vnd sarwot / Vnd bringe herwidder an die stat / Min frauwe, die küniginne, / Vnd gefellet sie uch zü gewynne, / Jr niessent auch ir mynne'" (12349–55; "when you are well and name a day, I'll get you a steed and armor, bring my lady, the queen, back here, and if you win her, you shall enjoy her love," 137).

⁴³ Bleumer, *Die 'Crône'*, 1997, 50, note 40, refers to the relevant research literature, but there the motif of the shipwreck is only interpreted in a philosophical fashion, as also in the case of the ancient-classical text *Apollonius of Tyre*, see my subsequent chapter.

⁴⁴ For a Christian reading, although it might not be implied here, see Sachs et al., *Wörterbuch*, 2005, 311–12.

⁴⁵ Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, 2003, vv. 4498–509. See also the previous chapter on rape in Hartmann's *Erec*.

No one asks Gynever whether she would consent to this proposition, although she simply goes along with the plan because it seems to be the only effective strategy to break the deadlock between these two men. In fact, she closely collaborates with Gawein to bring Gasozein safely back to the castle, although one of them always has to walk, and the other one has to hold Gasozein, and they exchange their positions when the walker faints and needs rest. Gawein's physical exhaustion is so great that he cannot even stand upright anymore: "Da batt er ein wilje geen / Die künigin, wenn er müde was / Vnd an allen vieren krasz / Jn dem sne vf dem gras" (12387–90; "and asked the queen if she would walk for a while. He was so weary that he was creeping on all fours in the snow," 138).

Ultimately, they reach castle Karidol where they receive the care and medical treatment necessary for their recovery, though it takes Gawein more than a year to heal completely. But it is a long-enough waiting period for Gasozein to realize his wrongdoing and evil behavior, as he finally admits publicly his previous deception and lying to win Gynever for himself: "Vmb min frauwen, vwer wip, / Gesigte ich, daz ich solt iren lip / One ansprach mynnen" (12563–56, "I was to enjoy the love of my lady, your wife, without challenge," 139), which restores happiness at court and even creates peace between the queen and Gasozein because the entire court and the king request her to grant forgiveness to him.

There is no discussion about Gynever's suffering and near rape at the hand of Gasozein. No one touches on the issue of the queen's denigration, abuse, abduction, mistreatment (even at her own brother's hand), and the fact that she barely escaped execution for alleged wrongdoing. On the contrary, the entire court laughs about a sexual joke by the steward Keii who, observing her return home with the two knights badly wounded and seemingly under her control:

"

Deshalb sie hat wol beieit,
 Das sie ein sit gester
 Gotegrin vnd Auguintester
 Vnd dise zwen mit tyosture
 Zü richer aventure
 Hat ritterlich erworben.
 Da weren verdorben
 Zwen recken vil lichte
 Von einer wonden sichte,
 Der trawet sie vil wol genesen,
 Ob sie halt tieffer wer gewesen."

(12488–98)

["' . . . She has had good hunting: all by herself, since yesterday, she has defeated Gotegrin, Auguintester, and these two by jousting in knightly contest: two warriors could easily have perished there. She knows that she will recover from a shallow wound, or even a deep one,'" 139].

The wound he is referring to, however, can only imply sexual penetration, and the male public must have chuckled loudly because they all would have assumed that women should be at their disposal, meaning that Gasozein's attempt to rape Gynever is obviously regarded as a minor infraction, although it would have severely undermined King Arthur's honor.⁴⁶ As Ian Frederick Moulton observes with regard to early-modern Dutch and English literature, and here with an eye toward one specific text, "The 'cut in Dutch' riddle represents the vagina as 'a wound' that makes female chastity almost impossible. . . . Although the vagina is seen as a threatening, engulfing wound, the poem explicitly rejects the notion, fashionable in many circles in more recent periods, that it is an absence, a lack—mere emptiness."⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, only King Arthur displays anger at Keii's joke because it proves to be a stab at his own sexual prowess and masculinity, being a husband who cannot control or protect his own wife, having been exposed as entirely useless in that terrible situation in which Gasozein would almost have raped her.

Some scholars have even suggested that there might have been a prior erotic relationship between Gynever and Gasozein, considering his original claim, her familiarity with the knight's performance in the wintry forest landscape, and her dubious behavior during the battle between Gawein and Gasozein, displaying almost, if not completely, equal sympathy for both.⁴⁸

By contrast, Gawein emerges truly as women's champion who fights to protect them from sexual and other violations and actually demonstrates his willingness to die for Gynever in order to protect her from being raped. As we read later: "Wan er was ie erbolgen / Reiner wibe vnselikeit, / Vnd was ir leit sins herten leit. / Wa er das moht verswenden, / Dar nach began er wenden / Lip, synn vnd muot, / Darzuo hab vnd guot, / Wann er was noch eren fruo"⁴⁹ (19079–86; "he had always been greatly disturbed at the misfortune of innocent women and his heart was pained by their grief. Whenever he could banish it, he devoted his mind, body, and courage, as well as his possessions, to this end; he was untiring in his pursuit of honor," 215). In fact, all the circumstances in this scene, particularly Gynever's desperate efforts to fend off Gasozein and her loud screams that finally attract Gawein to Ginever's rescue, clearly indicate that the poet intended to

⁴⁶ See now the contributions to *Laughter in the Middle Ages*, 2010.

⁴⁷ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 2000, 51.

⁴⁸ Stein, *Integration*, 2000, 224–32. He goes so far as to accuse Heinrich von dem Türlin of narrative inconsistency and clumsy manipulation of the plot development to cover of confusing contradictions.

⁴⁹ Whereas the manuscript V (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex 2779) spells out all these double vowels as 'uo,' etc., which is directly copied in vol. 1 of Heinrich von dem Türlin's work, manuscript P (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 274) uses superscripta for this umlaut. To avoid typographical errors, I write out all these umlauts.

present a ghastly case of an attempted rape that deserves radical condemnation, and this despite the light-heartedness with which the Arthurian court reacts to the brutal treatment that Gynever receives at her brother's hand and subsequently at Gasozein's. Of course, we might also read Keie's bizarre joke and the court's laughter when the three people finally return to court as an expression of relief, and not at all as an indication that they actually condone rape as 'normal' for women. At any rate, the entire company laughs, including the other women, which precisely complements the profound grief they had expressed before once they had learned of Gynever's kidnapping by her own brother.

In one sense, Heinrich von dem Türlin did not deviate in any particular way from the position assumed by most of his contemporaries, whether artists, poets, or lawyers, all consistently condemning rape as a horrible crime committed against women, although at the end laughter by the courtly community quickly casts a veil over the actual sexual crime that almost would have taken place. Nevertheless, as Diane Wolfthal emphasizes, concluding her in-depth study of medieval art reflecting upon this crime, "Medieval and early modern rape images suggest a series of strategies for combating rape. Some subvert the heroic ideal by focusing attention on the dark side of the warrior's aggressive behavior. Others appeal to the viewer's sense of outrage by constructing rape as a violent, sexual crime that deeply hurts the victim. Still others revise the cultural script by either refusing to show women as easily subject to rape or by portraying the violated woman as a strong and powerful figure who ensures that her rapist is executed."⁵⁰

But what are we to make of the endless jousts between Gawein and Gasozein? How are we to interpret the dreams of both men after they had fainted from sheer exhaustion and extensive loss of blood? Can the entire setting allow us to gain better insight into how the poet viewed the situation for women, and how he evaluated the situation of rape? It would not be enough to label the battle scene simply as 'grotesque,' 'absurd,' or 'burlesque,' all terms that involuntarily admit an inability to grasp the deeper meaning of the events as described in the text.⁵¹

I would not want to go so far as to identify the situation as a deliberate, though absurd travesty of the traditional rape of a woman by a male member of the court into a scene where two men rape each other.⁵² There is no sexual interest in any homosexual relationship. The two men would be fully prepared to kill each other as a consequence of their jousting and to uphold their honor. Gawein fights in order to defend the queen, and Gasozein tries to overcome his opponent and thus to secure Gynever for himself after all. Moreover, Gawein battles against him in order to protect Gynever and does not express any particular erotic interest in her.

⁵⁰ Wolfthal, *Images of Rape*, 1999, 198.

⁵¹ See, for instance, Jilling, *Diu Crone*, 1980, 41.

⁵² For rape of men, at least in modern times, see Scarce, *Male on Male Rape*, 1997.

Finally, a year later, Gasozein even admits his wrongdoing and hence also confesses that his intention had been to rape the queen.

The knights' deadly battle does not really represent a novelty in chivalrous romances, whereas the extent to which they cut each other such deep wounds and do not give up even when they are totally exhausted might serve as a meaningful representation of what Gasozein's rape of Gynever would have meant in reality. After all, though it hardly needs any reminder, rape has much more, or mostly, to do with violence than with sex, so Gasozein's action would have led to Gynever's severe wounding and bleeding, as we know so well from the numerous versions of the *Apollonius of Tyrus* narratives. If we extend our train of thought, we might argue that the massive wounds suffered by both men might simply reflect the wounds that she would have received if Gawein had not intervened in time.⁵³ To pursue the image implied here just a little further and to understand the analogy, we would have to say that the two knights penetrate each other's bodies with their swords as much as Gasozein would have penetrated the queen's body with his penis. The result is the same, that is, effusive bleeding and life-threatening injuries, but now not on Gynever's body; instead the two knights are suffering badly.

In an important passage later in Heinrich's romance, the narrator refers to rape a second time, here closely following the model already found in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* in those books dealing with Gawan.⁵⁴ In *Diu Crône*, Gawein comes across the knight Lohenis of Rahaz who seems to be badly wounded, lying under a linden tree, as if this were to symbolize once again that a man had become the victim of love. The setting proves to be, however, nothing but a trap for Gawein because, as we are told, "Das er es vf rache ted" (19369; "he was lying

⁵³ Occasionally medieval poets present cases where the male protagonist is sexually threatened by a woman, if not raped by her; see Scarborough, "The Rape of Men," 2008, 565–77. Sexual violation of men by men, however, is normally never mentioned. Brundage, *Law, Sex*, 1987, 213, mentions only one case discussed at the Council of Nablus (1120): "Men who suffered homosexual rape also escaped execution, but were nonetheless required to do canonical penance, presumably because of the ritual pollution that they had suffered."

⁵⁴ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, Book 521–Book 529. See Bumke, *Wolfram von Eschenbach*, 1991, 100–03. See also Bumke's excellent study *Die Blutstropfen*, 2001, 59–62. As he correctly observes: "Ebenso vieldeutig wie das Blutszeichen – Abbild höchster Schönheit, Zeichen der Passion, Ausweis der Verwandtschaft, Sinnbild der Unschuld – ist der Akt des Vergießens oder Begießens mit anderen Körpersäften" (61; The act of spilling or pouring on other bodily liquids is as ambivalent as the sign of the blood, which is the reflection of highest beauty, sign of the passion, evidence of relationship, and image of innocence). But he then limits his own reading to the binary opposition of men spilling blood as a consequence of their fighting, and of women shedding tears and giving milk: "Das sind geheimnisvolle Vorgänge, deren Bedeutung bis zur Selbstheilung reicht" (61; These are secret events whose meaning extends as far as to the act of self-healing). The key component in our investigation concerns shedding of blood and its significance for men and women.

there to get revenge," (19367). Without going much into detail, the narrator then quickly explains:

Er was Gawein gram
 Vmb ein cleine sach,
 Die ich uch kunt mach
 Gering an diser stund.
 Er was zû der taelrund
 Huszgenosz vnd geselle;
 Da verdiente er die kelle
 Von einer groszen vnzucht,
 Die er von der mynne frucht
 An einer megde beging;
 Dar vmb jne Gawein fing
 Vnd hiesz dorch die miszedot
 Nach des gesindes rat
 Buszen, als der sitt stat.

(19372–85)

["He hated Gawein because of a certain matter that can be quickly disclosed. He belonged to Arthur's court and was a member of the Round Table when he was justly imprisoned after love's passion led him to a flagrant act of violence against a maiden. Gawein took him captive and, following the advice of the courtiers, ordered that he be punished for the crime in accordance with their custom," 218].

Thomas's English translation here somewhat passes over a crucial point, however, which sheds particular, almost dubious, light on the narrator's sometimes rather ambiguous stance toward violence against women. "Vmb ein cleine sach" (19373) needs to be rendered as: 'for a small matter,' which actually seems to dismiss the charge of rape in a way, reducing it to a minor infraction, although the subsequent discussion contradicts this impression again. At times Heinrich von dem Türlin emerges as a strong and vocal defender of women's rights, but then he also allows such flippant remarks to undermine his previous position.

Apparently, as the further discussion illustrates, women enjoy considerable security and respect in Arthur's kingdom, being able to walk everywhere without having to fear any danger of being raped or threatened by anyone:

Wes jne da was zu muot,
 Das was sonder huot.
 Und sage uch me da von:
 Die megde waren des gewon
 Vnd was das da noch ir sitt,
 Das ein magt einem ritter mit
 Wol ein gantzes ja reit,
 Das sie kein wirdikeit
 Da mit an jren eren verlosz
 Ob sie ir selber nit enkosz

Vnd in ir mynne wert,
 Ob er ir so begert,
 Das ir die fruntschafft behagt,
 So wart von yme die selbe magt
 Vber jren willen bezwongen niht.

(19401–15)

[“They could do as they pleased without surveillance. What is more, it was still the practice and not uncommon for a maiden to ride about with a knight for a whole year without losing her good name. Should he want her love and such a relationship pleased her, she might decide for herself to grant him her favors, but the knight would not try to gain them by force,” 218–19].

The issue reflected upon here is nothing else but rape, intimately tied in with honor and the public laws. These are outlined subsequently in considerable detail, confirming once again that rape was treated as a severe crime that was to be punished harshly. Referring to such a case, however, the narrator underscores:

Ob er ir daruber icht
 Ted von keiner hand zwangsal,
 Also das die mere von yme erschal,
 Er wart zuo acht getan,
 Vnd beyde guot vnd man
 Wart yme widderteilet,
 Vnd wart vf jne gefeilet
 Das rich vnd die kron,
 Vnd muoste vil vnschon,
 So er ymmer begriffen wart,
 Vmb dise vnmeszige hochfart
 Jn der kellen sin verspart;
 ES were auch, ob das erging,
 Das ein ritter gefing
 Nach einander one quale,
 Das er zü keinem male
 Verfelet niht dar vnder,
 Zwentzig ritter bisonder,
 Der jne lösen wölde,
 Die man der meide zu solde
 Fur ir laster solte geben,
 Das sie mit guot vnd mit leben
 Solte tuon, wes sie gelust,
 Sonder aller akust”

(19416–39)

[“If he did and it became known, he was outlawed, stripped of property and liegemen, and abandoned by monarch and country. When he was caught, he was locked up in a vile prison for his boundless arrogance, unless some warrior who wanted to free him should be able to capture twenty knights, one after the other, without a pause or a single failure these knights would be assigned to the maiden so that she might do as

she wished with her property and her life without fear, as a recompense for the offense she had suffered," 219].

So there is a curious way out of the criminal persecution and imprisonment of the perpetrator, but even under the condition mentioned above, the consequences for the convicted rapist were harsh: "Er muosz aber selber das lant / Rumen suben jar zu hant. / so muosz er ir mynne pflegen, / Ob sie mynnen wöld den tegem, / Yemer mer bisz an iren dot" (19440–44; "he would still be forced to leave the country for seven years and, if she wanted him, would have to be his victim's faithful lover the rest of his life," 219). This legal framework was instituted by King Arthur himself: "Fur der notnunfft not / Die buosze kunig Artus gebot" (19445–46; "This was the sentence that King Arthur had imposed for rape," 219).⁵⁵

Lohenis of Rahaz, however, had committed rape, and the victim raised a hue and a cry at King Arthur's court. Gawein immediately took it upon himself to apprehend the perpetrator, who was thrown ". . . in die kelle, / Das er der hunde geselle / Dorch die vnzuht were" (19457–59; "into a cell, which he shared with the dogs," 219), and stayed there in all misery for fourteen weeks. Finally, the protagonist himself had intervened and liberated Lohenis, performing the very deed required for the release of such a prisoner. Nevertheless, although the maid at the end forgave him his transgression, Lohenis "[] müste von dem land / Vnd von dem houe keren / Mit michelen vneren. / Da wart die huszgenozschafft / Yme versagt von der ritterschafft / Vnd von des kunigs magenkrafft" (19477–82; "he still was forced to leave the court and the land in dishonor, cut off from the fellowship of knights and king," 219).

Tragically, neither the punishment nor the release from prison, secured by Gawein himself, changed the knight's heart and mind. In fact, Loheniz "Das leit vnd die swere / Wolt er an yme gerochen han" (19490–91; "he was determined to take vengeance on him for the hardship and grief he had suffered," 219).

Employing a skillful ruse and cunning, the perpetrator first seems to achieve his goal, but ultimately Gawein triumphs over him and defeats all his evil ploys, which does not need to be discussed here further, particularly because it is in very close parallel to the events already described by Wolfram von Eschenbach in his *Parzival*. In fact, the narrator never returns to Loheniz and his evil deed as a rapist; instead the focus rests entirely on Gawein's subsequent knightly accomplishments in which he even supersedes famous Parzival. Nevertheless, we can conclude with a number of significant observations regarding the treatment of rape in *Diu Crône*.

Twice the narrative refers to this ghastly deed and characterizes it exactly as such. There are specific laws against rape, promulgated by King Arthur, and for this reason women in all the lands controlled by the latter enjoy a high degree of

⁵⁵ For the sources that Heinrich von dem Türlin used for this entire episode, see Zach, *Die Erzählmotive*, 1990, 66.

freedom and independence, and do not have to worry about any threats by their male counterparts, irrespective of their own social status, in direct contrast to the comments made by Andreas Capellanus in his *De amore* (ca. 1190).⁵⁶

Gawein steps in each time when rape is either about to happen or has already occurred. He proves his outstanding character as a supreme champion of women's honor and rights, and fights valiantly for them. The laws as formulated by King Arthur explicitly identify rape as a serious sexual crime that must not be tolerated. Nevertheless, as this romance confirms, rape happened easily when a knight did not know how to control his passion and disregarded women's honor and legal status as equals within courtly society. Even the queen herself almost becomes a victim of rape, and only Gawein's accidental appearance at the scene prevents the crime against her to occur.

There is not much discussion about the true nature of rape, except that it seems to be the result of uncontrollable sexual desire. We know today, of course, that rape has mostly to do with a power struggle and fairly little with sex. A man who tries to rape a woman regularly employs violence to overcome his victim's resistance. This is the case in *Diu Crône* as well, but Gynever succeeds in protecting herself long enough so that Gawein can enter the scene and stop Gasozein in his evil endeavor.

The narrator demonstrates a keen understanding of how a rapist would approach his victim and describes in considerable details what physical force the perpetrator has to use to achieve his goal. The details are not so clear in the case of Loheniz, but this episode appears only as a kind of afterthought to explain why Gawein faces the dangerous challenger and has to undergo a series of life-threatening combats. But Loheniz's revengeful strategy against the protagonist sheds significant light on his character, connecting his rape with a drastic condemnation of his personality, insofar as he is lacking honor, decency, morality, and respect for women. Gasozein comes to his 'courtly' senses all by himself and confesses publicly that he had lied about Gynever in order to gain power over her. Curiously, there are no further consequences for him, neither legal nor political. In fact, Gasozein is quickly reintegrated into the Arthurian court because he has been pardoned, even by Gynever, obviously as a result of group pressure.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 1990, 150: "And if you should, by some chance, fall in love with some of their women, be careful to puff them up with lots of praise and then, when you find a convenient place, do not hesitate to take what you seek and to embrace them by force. For you can hardly soften their outward inflexibility so far that they will grant you their embraces quietly or permit you to have the solaces you desire unless first you use a little compulsion as a convenient cure for their shyness."

⁵⁷ For Bleumer, *Die 'Crône'*, 1997, Gasozein basically represents the typical role of the courtly lover who woos a married lady, thereby challenging her husband indirectly in feudal terms, 53. This

It seems that we are dealing with double standards here, at least as far as the punishment of the rapist is concerned. Loheniz has to undergo a severe penalty, including most humiliating imprisonment with the dogs and expulsion from the country for seven years, whereas Gasozein gets off practically scot-free. Of course, Gawein had intervened in the last minute and rescued the queen, but Gasozein still had abducted Gynever and had already taken the first steps to rape her. But in contrast to Loheniz he proves to be a most outstanding knight against whom even Gawein cannot really gain victory in their jousting and subsequent wrestling and fighting. In fact, Gawein takes much longer to heal fully and to overcome all bodily pains than his opponent, whereas Loheniz does not even dare to fight against Gawein openly and instead resorts to trickery, deception, and betrayal to get his revenge.

Nevertheless, Heinrich von dem Türlin explicitly addresses the crime of rape and condemns the perpetrators without any hesitation. He harbors considerably more sympathy for Gasozein than for Loheniz, but the laws according to which the latter is harshly punished are applicable to all and actually should have been consulted also in the Gasozein's case, except that both Arthur and Gynever forgive him at the end. Considering that the crime of rape almost would have happened in the traditional *locus amoenus*, under a linden tree,⁵⁸ though still deeply hidden in the forest, hence far away from courtly society,⁵⁹ the narrator clearly indicates his strict opposition to this crime and refers to it because it illustrates into what depths even the world of King Arthur can fall down. In addition, Gawein demonstrates in both cases how much he can be trusted as the true champion of women in distress. From the scene with Loheniz we learn how much the courtly world was predicated on specific laws defending weaker members of society, that is, widows and orphans (though the latter are not mentioned here).

Nevertheless, perhaps even against his own best intentions, Heinrich von dem Türlin reveals through the lengthy discussion of how various men treat Queen Gynever and how the court responds to her suffering, how much even the highest ranking courtly ladies could easily become victims of male machinations, perpetration, violence, and sexual transgression. There are laws to protect women from rapists, but unless they find a strong champion who can practically intervene and fight on their behalf, rape could easily occur, as women were not in a good position to defend themselves in physical terms. Even King Arthur fails in this regard, though not deliberately, insofar as his honor is often at stake and as he

ultimately closes the door to the large topic of rape and allows the scholar to concentrate on narrative, figural, and conceptual elements, safely keeping the eyes turned away from the dramatic dilemma faced by the queen.

⁵⁸ Zach, *Die Erzählmotive*, 1990, 84.

⁵⁹ For a broader treatment of this topic, see Saunders, *The Forest*, 1993.

seems to pay more attention to knightly ideals than to step up to the plate and defend his own wife against ill repute and then sexual transgression.

Heinrich von dem Türlin explicitly condemns the rape of women, and he even mentions laws that severely threaten the punishment of the perpetrators. But probably in conformity with the reality of his time a rapist could be easily reintegrated again into society if the actual act had not yet occurred and the criminal belonged to the highest elite. We have to assume that Gasozein would have suffered the same destiny as Loheniz if Gawein had arrived too late to protect the queen, and if he had been strong enough to overcome the rapist knight as easily as Loheniz.

Granted, with *Diu Crône* we find ourselves in the world of courtly fiction, where narrative consistency, legal and other logic, and realistic portrayal of crime and punishment were not of the highest relevance for Heinrich or his audience. Still, the poet presents most significant scenes of attempted or actual rape and illustrates, through his protagonist, the ideal response by knightly characters who are supposed to do everything possible to defend the female victim/s. Whether the curious battle between Gawein and Gasozein might carry any sexual implications, perhaps in the sense of a physical substitution of the rape that the latter had intended, can only be surmised. Perhaps a psychological reading of the deep wounds, the unending fighting, the curious dreams, and the knights' utter exhaustion, making their return home most arduous and almost impossible, could shed more light on this setting.

For our purposes, we can conclude that Heinrich von dem Türlin was daring enough to present two remarkable situations in which women are subjected to rape, in the one case successful in terms of the perpetrator, in the other not. The condemnation is clear enough and underscores how much medieval courtly society was concerned with this crime. Nevertheless, the court's quick dismissal of Gasozein's egregious perpetration, their mutual laughter about Keii's sexual joke, and later the lack of any concern about the consequences of Loheniz's attempt to entrap Gawein also indicate that the ultimate implications of rape did not truly interest the poets and their audiences. There is not one word of criticism directed at Gynever's brother Gotegrin's unjust, brutal, and almost murderous treatment of the queen, even though everyone is deeply troubled about her disappearance and subsequently the realistic assumption that Gasozein would rape her: "Ein chlag wart so gemein, / Daz si besunder vnd alein / Was des houes gesinde" (11519–21; "The lamentation became general, spreading through the entire court," 129). However, no one tries to rescue Gynever, no one follows the trails left behind, and they communally submit to the greatest possible sorrow and grief without taking any actions. Of course, this serves primarily to profile

Gawein's subsequent heroic accomplishment in rescuing the queen, and again we would pursue an anachronistic perspective asking for realistic and pragmatic actions and performance. By contrast, the traumatic experience of Gynever at the hand of Gasozein, and the actual suffering of the maid at the hand of Loheniz still remind us how much courtly society was deeply concerned about women's well-being and expressed horror at the idea that individual knights could lower themselves so deeply as to rape a married woman or a maid.

Diu Crône does not argue specifically for new laws and legal measures against rape, and there is no explicit exploration of the physical and psychological damages brought about by rape. Nevertheless, ultimately, and this represents a major thematic issue, women's legal and physical protection was, as this courtly romance indicates, of greatest concern. Rape represented hence a major transgression and was persecuted with the full force available, both in terms of physical actions (knighthood) and the laws. Nevertheless, Heinrich von dem Türlin treats rape as a matter that could also be regarded as a cavalier conflict, as the court easily laughs about Keii's joke regarding the queen's metaphorical wounds. In other words, there is always a sense of ambiguity regarding rape, even in the worst-case scenario.

As terrible as Gasozein's attempt to rape the queen might be, it provides the usual background for Gawein to prove his chivalry and outstanding knightly prowess. Once again, the male author certainly condemns rape as a punishable crime, but his true interest rests in the bitter, almost deadly joust between the two protagonists. In this regard we can agree with Susan Samples: "Nonetheless, the depicted rape severely restricts the experience of Ginover: her terror, shame, and anger are not portrayed. Such a depiction would probably have elicited sympathy and compassion from Heinrich's audience."⁶⁰ But the romance focuses on Gawein, and it is not a narrative about Queen Gynever's life. It would not be fair to argue that her victimization is deliberately downplayed and that only her weeping makes the protagonist inquire about her predicament. After all, the setting strongly evokes the traditional *locus amoenus*, and Gawein was truly not in the best position to recognize easily whether he had come across a couple in love or a rape scene; hence his investigation first, which is fully appropriate, especially in light of his subsequent actions to defend the queen against being raped.

Not surprisingly, Gynever ultimately forgives Gasozein, so courtly culture can continue as before, though the romance views the world of King Arthur through the lens of satire insofar as the knightly perpetrator is condemned as a rapist, yet praised as an outstanding, perhaps even triumphant knight against whom even Gawein has the greatest difficulties during the fierce battle after Gasozein's failed attempt to rape the queen. Gasozein is integrated back into Arthur's court just too

⁶⁰ Samples, "The Rape of Ginover," 1995, 200.

quickly, considering what he had attempted to do, which leaves us with a strong feeling of unease about the ultimate interpretation of the rape scene and of the author's true attitude toward women.⁶¹

We cannot claim that Queen Gynever is brutally raped in the literal sense, though her aggressor displayed all the relevant intentions. Further, we cannot argue that Gawein rapes Gasozein, or that there might be a homosexual relationship. But rape constitutes a major issue involving the entire court, King Arthur, his nephew Gawein, and ultimately the entire value system supporting the idea of knighthood. As Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône* powerfully exemplifies, the maintenance of law and order, of a moral and ethical value system, and of public respect and honor proves to be rather fragile, and violence, especially sexual violence, easily looms in the background. Gawein desperately tries to observe the principles of chivalry in his fight against Gasozein to the very minute details, but this brings him dangerously close to a point where he could be defeated by his opponent, who then would have no hesitation in raping the queen after all. The Arthurian ideals thus prove to be just a thin veneer, and the court, predicated on chivalry and courtly love, can easily fail, even collapse, as the example of the anonymous *Mauritius von Craûn* also illustrates.

The ultimate question strongly emerges in all our literary examples how rape can be avoided and what legal and physical measures courtly society is willing to bring to bear to offer the female members at least a modicum of security and stability in their lives. If a society cannot answer this question, it seems to be bound to fail. There is no doubt about the considerable degree of unease with which we leave this romance behind, since the ambivalence regarding women's bodies and their integrity, then regarding the evaluation of rape and of the relationship of the male members of the court to each other simply does not find a satisfactory resolution. Little wonder that Heinrich von dem Türlin played so much with elements borrowed from the bizarre, the grotesque, and the absurd since he seemed to have enjoyed considerably the dimension of transgression of the courtly world, which also implies women's rights and physical protection.

⁶¹ Jillings, "The Abduction," 1977, 33: "Outwardly order is upheld and peace prevails in the world of chivalry. By this device the narrator remains within the conventions of his genre and yet, through the sheer transparency of his solution (which he brushes over in the narrative) he is able to present, to those in his audience with the wit to appreciate the purpose of the outrageous elements of his account, a vigorous satirical undermining of Arthur and his court."

Chapter 5

Rape in Medieval Latin and Middle High German Poetry: Walther von der Vogelweide and the *Carmina Burana*

Not all cases of rape are easily identifiable, particularly if they are not directly associated with open, brutal, or physical violence. Date rape and the violent form of incest, both often closely interrelated, show their ugly heads in many medieval narratives, and are commonly, though not always, treated with clear and unmistakable disgust and rejection by the various authors, as we have seen above, and as will encounter later again. Sometimes, however, a woman experiences, after all, some form of violation in sexual terms even if she herself is seemingly interested in physical intimacy and does not dare, or cannot explicitly say ‘no.’ A man who makes use of his young sexual victim seducing her by means of his authority, power, or material gifts would argue in this case that she agreed and wanted the sexual experience herself after all, as numerous other medieval texts or authors all over Europe reflect unmistakably.¹ Here violence is often hidden behind satirical, ironic, or simply comic elements, and therefore we tend to be blinded to the underlying forms of rape treated in those texts. But the ensuing laughter is not a mask strong enough to hide the terror resulting from the sexual crime, which medieval audiences also knew just too well.² After all, in the Middle

¹ An excellent example can be found in the mid fifteenth-century French collection *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. Here, in the twenty-fifth story, a young man is sued by a woman for having raped her. But he can convince the judge that the maid had wanted sex from him as well, and involuntarily she later admits this publicly in court, confessing that she had been afraid of his erect genital and, worrying about getting hurt by it, had placed it herself into the right orifice. This tale, allegedly by a Philippe De Saint-Yon, concludes with a loud burst of laughter from the entire audience, “both from the judges and the public. The young man was discharged,—to continue his rabbit-hunting if he saw fit The girl was angry that he was not hanged on a high forked tree for having hung on her ‘low forks.’ But this anger and resentment did not last long, for as I heard afterwards on good authority, peace was concluded between them, and the youth had the right to ferret in the coney burrow whenever he felt inclined.” The English translation is available online at many sites, see, for example: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18575/18575-h/18575-h.htm> (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011). This is the translation by Robert B. Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie And Delightful Stories*, 1899).

² See *Laughter in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 2010.

Ages, a clear-cut case of rape, with convincing evidence to convict the alleged culprit, almost automatically led, *mutatis mutandis*, to the death penalty.³

Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that treatment or criticism of this form of rape cannot be detected in the relevant literary documents, so the specific question that I will pursue here pertains to what kind of literary discourse on statutory rape, to use a modern term, we can identify precisely in that period and culture. More importantly, was there even an awareness that forcing a young person, specifically under age (also very relevant for that time period) to have sex with an older man, hence with a person of authority (cleric, knight, teacher, etc.), and this outside of the bonds of marriage, constituted violence? Can we even imagine, and then possibly demonstrate through careful critical analysis, that in a world dominated by patriarchal thinking such behavior might have been viewed negatively and could have met broad condemnation? Or that there might have been at least an awareness of the transgression committed by the rapist? As the case studied by Jeremy Goldberg now indicates, medieval courts were deeply troubled when such charges were raised, and they had a hard time reaching a satisfactory judgment.⁴

Of course, we immediately face the danger in our critical investigation of over-interpreting the textual evidence, and perhaps even to impose anachronistically modern views (and terms) on medieval documents if we try to be excessively critical and sensitive in this regard. Nonetheless, more often than not the context itself, the language, and the peculiar setting of concrete relationships as dealt with by medieval poets allow us to gain deeper insights into the troublesome problems that a very young woman might experience, which then were even examined by medieval poets who either offered severe criticism or viewed such a case satirically, if not sarcastically. In other words, we do not need, and even often cannot, to determine with all the wished-for clear-cut evidence what a poet might have intended with his/her text and so must make our best effort, instead, to investigate what a specific situation as presented within a narrative might imply with regard to sexual violence.

Yet, in order to avoid excessively feminist-driven postmodern speculations, we have to pay close attention to the narrative framework, the exchanges of words, the subtle yet noticeable sexual allusions, and concrete statements with which a protagonist might try to exert force, if not apply violence, to his victim. In other words, a sound philological analysis remains of paramount importance to establish trustworthy evidence through textual analysis. There also would have

³ Poets such as Wolfram von Eschenbach (*Parzival*) and Geoffrey Chaucer ("The Wife of Bath's Tale") specifically remark on this legal condition, and the twenty-fifth story in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* confirms this observation as well. There is no need here to search for additional support in medieval law books since that topic has been covered numerous times.

⁴ Jeremy Goldberg, *Communal Discord*, 2008.

to be some indication that those in charge of the younger person, hence a mother or a father, or any other relative, not to speak of the victim, reacted with indignation, anger, fury, if not hatred, against the perpetrator, which could also be the poet him/herself. Further, the observation of satire, irony, and sarcasm in such a scenario can certainly shed further light on the subconscious or concrete awareness that forcing a young woman, or worse, a pre-puberty girl, to have sex constituted a severe perpetration that could, or even should, be persecuted with the full force of the laws.

An individual poem, for instance, or a verse narrative, can unequivocally illustrate the characteristic discourse dominant at a specific time, predicated on a certain set of ethical and moral norms and values, whether the author specifically intended to express them or not. A good case in point would be the genre of the *pastourella* all by itself where a knight usually encounters a shepherdess, or another peasant woman, enters into a debate with her, asks her for her love, and often, though not always, can convince her, if not force her, to lie down with him to enjoy each other's body. In some cases, to be sure, the woman can beat off the knight with her witty comments, ridiculing him as a pompous yet unworthy person, quickly exposing his purely sexual desires and his crude recklessness in treating her as a person. Normally, however, the knight exerts some violence and can force the woman to have sex with him, which the poem then comments on as a pleasure allegedly both for the violated woman and for the male perpetrator (and his audience; see, for example, the statements by Andreas Capellanus on sleeping with peasant women, even against their will).⁵

One of the best examples for this problematic issue of and attitude toward such a sexual experience that is supposed to be shared by both but is really forced upon the female victim can be detected in the *Carmina Burana*, a collection mostly of Latin, but also mixed-language songs (Latin and Middle High German), from the early thirteenth century, collated somewhere in modern-day Austria or southern Germany. This collection of 228 poems, compiled by at least three scribes and beautifully illustrated, was discovered in the Benedictine monastery of Benediktbeuren (southwest of Munich) in 1803, hence the name *Carmina Burana*. Latest research points to the Augustinian convent of Neustift near Brixen, South Tyrol, perhaps with ca. 1230 as the most likely date when the manuscript was created, but alternatives are not excluded. The manuscript is today housed in the

⁵ For a brief but succinct introduction, see Paden, "Pastourelle," 1993, 888. For the German examples of this genre, see Brinkmann, *Die deutschsprachige Pastourelle*, 1985; for the French tradition, see Zink, *La Pastourelle*, 1972; for the English tradition, see Sichert, *Die mittellenglische Pastourelle*, 1991; for Occitan representatives, see Audiau, *La Pastourelle*, 1973). See also *The Medieval Pastourelle*, trans. and ed. William D. Paden, 1987.

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, under the signature Clm 4660.⁶ Although some of the songs express purely theological, ethical, and moral concerns, a majority of them can be identified as ribald songs about drinking, women, sex, and other joys of life for men. Some of the composers are known by name, such as Peter of Blois, Walter of Châtillon, Marbod of Rennes, Geoffrey of Winchester, Philippe the Chancellor, Hilarius of Orléans, and the anonymous Archpoet, and in general we can be certain that the entire collection was the result of literary, musical entertainment by and for members of the universities; hence students and their professors. There are six sections treating different topics: *Carmina ecclesiastica* (songs on religious themes); *Carmina moralia et satirica* (moral and satirical songs); *Carmina amatoria* (amatory songs); *Carmina potoria* (drinking songs, along with gambling songs); then *Ludi* (religious plays); and *Supplementum* (songs with variant texts).⁷ One text in particular, CB 185, will serve extraordinarily well as an introduction to our topic at large, though I will subsequently switch from the lyric genre (*Carmina Burana*) to the verse narrative (*mære*) where the topic at stake increases in significance.

The song “Ich was ein chint so wolgetan” (CB 185) has long been recognized as a parody of Walther von der Vogelweide’s “Under der linden” in which a young woman sings of her experience when she went out to the heather, or meadow, to meet her lover.⁸ Under the linden tree, so the title, somewhere near the forest, he had already prepared a love bed for them both, using petals and grass to make it as comfortable for her as possible. Everyone who would pass by that site later would still recognize what had happened there and would quietly laugh with full approval of the discovery that two lovers had enjoyed each other at that spot: “des wirt noch gelachtet / innecliche, / kumt iemen an daz selbe pfat, / bi den rosen er wol mac, / tanderdei, / merken wa mirz houbet lac” (III, 22–27; everyone who will walk down the same path will laugh happily. At the rose petals he will notice well, tanderadei, where my head was resting). The female singer expresses her inner joy about the amatory bliss and gives her lover great praise, at least indirectly, for his care and dedication.⁹

⁶ Here I use the edition by Vollmann, *Carmina Burana*, 1987.

⁷ For an excellent online-version of the original text, see: http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost13/CarminaBurana/bur_car0.html (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011).

⁸ Heinen, “Walther’s ‘Under der linden,’” 1989, 51–69.

⁹ Walther von der Vogelweide, *Leich, Lieder, Sangsprüche*, ed. Christoph Cormeau, 1996. For helpful introductions to Walther, though mostly written with the student reader in mind, see Hermann Reichert, *Walther von der Vogelweide für Anfänger*, 2009, and Otfried Ehrismann, *Einführung in das Werk Walthers von der Vogelweide*, 2008.

Most importantly, however, she formulates a deep sense of joy about this love experience and indirectly allows, though with some loving embarrassment, the audience to share her erotic happiness despite the repeated insistence on secrecy and the formulation that she would feel deep shame if anyone were to find out what happened with her. The onomatopoeitic refrain, "tandaradei," specifically alludes to their love-making, though in the end we are told only in vague terms what really took place. But the erotic imagination leaves nothing for us guessing.¹⁰

The female voice emphasizes how much she hopes that no one would ever learn the truth about their erotic encounter, except for a little bird that had watched them. Concomitantly, however, the audience is made into voyeurs and every listener is invited, at least implicitly, to recreate the entire scene, with full approval because of its idyllic setting and the apparently complete harmony and unison between the two lovers. Walther here created probably the most beautiful, most sensitive woman's song in the entire Middle Ages, which almost aims at a utopian setting because the realization of fulfilled love is projected to happen far away from society and in secrecy.

The audience is allowed to dream along with the young woman about an ideal love relationship that can bloom free from all dangers, challenges, and threats by courtly society, hence far away from human society, without being hidden in the wild and dangerous forest, for instance.¹¹ After all, the narrative voice implies that people might pass by the spot where she had met her lover, and he had found enough roses to prepare with the petals a cover for the ground, all of which suggests proximity to the court, and yet still sufficient distance to guarantee temporary secrecy.¹² There is no indication whatsoever of force, violence, or subjugation; instead the young woman ambulated into a landscape of spring to find her lover who had already waited for her. They are in love and happily enjoy the intimate moment with each other. In short, here we are the furthest possible away from the topic of rape in medieval literature.¹³

The situation radically changes in "Ich was ein chint so wolgetan," although the narrative framework remains the same, clearly supporting the intention of creating a parody, yet now predicating the experience of erotic love on the use of force; hence leading to rape. Again a female voice reports what has happened, without entering into any dialogue with a male partner. The audience is here also invited

¹⁰ Graham, *Onomatopoeitics*, 1992; Knapp, "'Amor perductus,'" 2007, 87–96.

¹¹ Rasmussen, "Representing Woman's Desire," 1991, 69–85. Remarkably, this love takes place at the edge of the forest, not within the forest, which was commonly regarded with great fear in the Middle Ages.

¹² Spearing, "The Medieval Poet as V voyeur," 1991, 60, emphasizes: "Notice that she says ashamed . . . , not guilty: it is a delightfully cheerful poem, and she is speaking not of any actual remorse at illicit love, but of how her feelings would be affected if what happened were known to others."

¹³ Sievert, *Studien*, 1990, 93–106.

to witness virtually all the individual steps in this seduction scene, a characterization which becomes immediately clear through the refrain: “Hoy et oe! / maledicantur thylic / iuxta viam posite” (1, 5–7; Oh, and oh dear! Cursed be the linden trees located next to the path). Instead of going to the meadow to meet her lover, here the young woman claims that she only intended to pick some flowers; however, relying on a *figura etymologica*, these flowers become the symbol of her suffering from a rude man who deflowered her: “ibi deflorare” (2, 4). He takes her by the hand, which could be read both as a form of violence and as a form of courtly gesture, as she emphasizes immediately: “sed non indecenter” (3, 2; but not indecently), certainly evoking laughter by the male audience.

But his subsequent actions speak a clear language to the opposite because he orders her to follow with him down the path toward the meadow: “er wist mich div wise lanch” (3, 3; he directed me toward the meadow; or: he led me through the meadow), which she now comments as “valde fraudulenter” (3, 4; very deceptively). In other words, despite the superficially humorous tone of voice, and despite her own initial intention to reach that area to pick flowers—only seemingly, as we know too well, an innocent activity¹⁴—this verse clearly conveys a sense of violence. He pushes her to rush forward because the distance to the

¹⁴ See the famous ‘Strawberry-Song’ (“Hie vor dô wir kinder wâren”) by the Wilde Alexander, first half of the thirteenth century, where picking flowers and eating strawberries clearly signal the end of sexual innocence and the first experience of adulthood. Carl von Kraus, ed., *Deutsche Liederdichter des 13. Jahrhunderts*, 1978, no. V, pp. 12–13; see also McDonald, “A Pauline Reading,” 1984, 156–75. Whether the brief reference to the snake bite could be interpreted as an indication of rape, cannot be determined here, though there is clearly a sense of violation that has happened to one of the female (?) companions. The use of the term “gfeterlîn” translates only vaguely as ‘little friend,’ but it seems most likely that the poet had only young women in mind who go out to the meadow to pick strawberries, particularly because in stanza 2 he included the line: “welch diu schœnest möhte sîn” (who [among the girls] would be the most beautiful):

Ez gienc ein kint in dem krûte,
daz erschrac und rief vil lûte
‘kinder, hie lief ein slang in,
der beiz unser gfeterlîn;
daz enheilet nimmer,
er muoz immer
sûren unde unsælic sîn.’

(stanza 5)

A child walked among the herbs
when it got frightened and shouted out loud:
‘children, a snake came by here
that bit our friend;
the wound will never heal,
s/he will always
suffer and will be unhappy.’

For flower symbolism in general, see Heilmeyer, *The Language of Flowers*, 2001.

forest is considerable ("nemus est remotum," 5, 2; the forest is far away), a metaphor of the world free of all laws. This is curiously coupled with her later comment that she had left behind at the linden tree, the very site where the lovers in Walther's poem enjoyed their erotic happiness, her music instruments, moving perhaps, metaphorically speaking, from Paradise (her virginity) to Hell (loss of her innocence). Once these two young people have reached this linden tree, the actual sexual intercourse takes place. Obviously reflecting primarily the man's wishes and intentions, she cites his own words: "'ludum faciamus!'" (7, 4; let's do a game), which is immediately followed by the same onomatopoetic refrain, allowing the poet to let the male erotic fantasy develop freely.

Not surprisingly, the subsequent stanzas remove all possible doubts about the actual meaning since the woman is explicitly identified as an object of male desire. Drawing from traditional knightly language, the female narrator comments on the man's physical control and complains almost aggressively: "Er graif mir an den wizen lîp / non absque timore" (8, 1-2; he touched my skin-white body, and this without any fear), with the verb actually signaling a grabbing, attacking move on his part. Emphasizing the consequences of the progress in their affair, he states, as reported through her words, quite unequivocally: "'ich mache dich ein wip, / dulce es cum ore'" (8, 3-4; I'll make you to a woman; how sweet are your lips). Thereupon we are told in even more explicit terms that he pushed himself upon her and, well, raped her after he had exposed her body ("Er warf mir uof daz hemdelin," 43; he threw up my shirt), expressing the attack then in the terms of a successful siege: "er rante mir in das purgelin" (9, 3; he ran into my little castle), with the following line not hiding anything anymore, allowing us, as if we still needed to learn that, to comprehend the meaning of the metaphor: "cuspidie erecta" (9, 4; with an erect lance).

The following stanza circumscribes the 'game' in terms of the hunt: "bene venabatur" (10, 2; the hunting went well), but the female voice also remarks rather angrily that she had been cheated, or deceived: "der selbe hete mich betrogen" (10, 3; this man had cheated me). The satirical reference to 'game' here once again plays a significant role because the poem appeals to a male audience and undoubtedly wants to underscore the free availability of young women for their sexual desires. Subtly, however, the narrative voice comments on this approach rather negatively, but not with any intention to reject or even to condemn illicit sexuality outside of the bonds of marriage. Instead, the laments only underscore how much the man managed to conquer his victim, and to catch the prey, to stay in the image, adding further sexual incentive for him. Although the young woman curses the path which led to that linden tree, and although she pretends to regret her decision to take this route in the first place ("dirre wech der habe haz! / planxi et hoc totum," 5, 3-4; may this path be cursed; I cried the whole time), the setting with the linden tree and the reference to the music instruments powerfully serve

to intensify the message contained in this poem that sexual conquest was a form of game, or a hunt, for the man. Her protests and defense mechanisms only served to intensify the erotic tension for him and to incite him to the utmost to pursue his goal, his sexual prey.

The most disturbing aspect of this famous song, disturbing at least for modern sensitivities and attitudes—but then perhaps also disturbing for a female audience in the Middle Ages, if we consider, for instance, some of the statements by the *troubairitz* or by Marie de France expressing their great discontent concerning how the male lovers treat their mistresses—might well be the pervasive message that this is all just fun and delightful, and that the man should not even bother to ask the young woman about her wishes or concerns. The framework with the central iconic object, the linden tree, conveys the dominant idea that a little force in handling this girl would not hurt at all. Although she laments at the end about this very tree (rather in the plural: trees), repeating the refrain once again, “maledicantur thylic” (1, 6; cursed be the linden trees), she has no choice and can hardly be described as a willing partner in this erotic-sexual game.

Intriguingly, although the poet has utilized the female voice for his specific purposes of creating a screen to hide behind his obviously sexual desires, the male perspective totally dominates. Whereas she comments in the first stanza about the considerable respect that she had enjoyed in public previously when she still had been a virgin, the poem concludes with the rather curt statement “ludus compleatur!” (51; the game was completed), not granting her any opportunity to express her feelings or concerns since they do not matter for the male poet.

In Walther’s poem the female voice is most seriously interested in joining with her lover, who does not force her at all to meet him under the linden tree. She goes to the meadow on her own volition, whereas in *CB* 185 the man coerces the woman to come with him and to play the game with him (it is a game only for him!). Walther has his female voice confirm that she rushed to her lover who waited for her, but in *CB* 185 she emphasizes that he is in love, or rather is determined by sexual lust, whereas her own feelings seem to be of no significance: “diu minne twanch sere den man” (35; love strongly forced the man). A further important difference is that in Walther’s song the man has prepared a bed of flowers and petals, while in *CB* 185 the man simply commands the woman to sit down under the linden tree whereupon he immediately begins to touch her, and then proceeds with his efforts to rape her. In fact, although here a woman speaks, it is unmistakably a man’s song, even though we are informed about him, his feelings, and his concerns only through her lens, that is, in reality, his lens: “Er sprach” (23; He said); “Do er zu der linden chom” (33; When he got to the linden tree); “Er graif mir an den wizen lip” (38; He touched my white body); “Er warf mir uof daz hemdelin” (33; He threw up my shirt); “Er nam den chocher unde den bogen” (48; He took the quiver and the bow). Only in the first two stanzas does she

speak about herself: “Ich was ein chint so wolgetan” (1; I was such a beautiful girl); and: “Ia wolde ih an die wisen gan” (8; I wanted to go to the meadow). Why she intended to turn toward the meadow remains obscure, and would be nothing but a flimsy pretense by the male poet to put the female victim within the reach of the male perpetrator.

Walther has his female voice emphasize repeatedly her great concern that the love affair remain a secret, though the entire poem is predicated on the intriguing strategy to reveal the secret after all and to allow the audience to participate virtually in the blissful happiness of these two lovers.¹⁵ The parodist in the *Carmina Burana* operates on the very opposite level, projecting the idea how delightful it would be to seduce a young woman and to force her into a position where the man can simply take his pleasure with her under the cover of the linden tree without asking for her agreement or approval. The repeated reference to this ominous linden tree, the exclamations of sorrow—though the word choice reveals that they are meant as tongue-in-cheek only—and the exclusive focus on what the man does to the woman confirm the poet’s purpose to glorify and legitimize men’s forceful approach in matters of sexuality.

Does he rape her, however? The entire context, the word choice, her laments, and the references to symbolic objects, such as her music instruments left behind at the linden tree, confirm this suspicion. The male lover emerges as a hunter who chases his prey and captures or kills it, as expressed in the image: “‘ludus compleatur’” (51). The game is over, indeed, sexual intercourse has happened, and no more words need to be said. The woman laments, of course, throughout the poem, but she does not put up any resistance, insofar as the poet wants her to signal to the man that despite her lack of response to his physical aggression she also desires to enjoy this sexual game. Altogether, the element of parody aimed at Walther’s poem reveals that violence is undoubtedly at play here, and that the man, in a way, fully in conformity with the entire genre of *pastourellas*, commits rape.¹⁶

The vicious, or dangerous, character of this poem consists of its seductive power to which apparently even female listeners/readers today seem to respond positively. The intriguingly playful nature of the erotic setting, the skillful employment of terms pertaining to a military siege and to hunting, the intricate switching of Latin to Middle High German and back, and the hilarious attempt by the female voice to blame the linden tree for her unexpected (really?) suffering at the hand of the man, evoke, surprisingly, sympathy with the entire situation as if the man’s forceful treatment of his victim would be perfectly alright. Moreover,

¹⁵ Ehrismann, *Einführung in das Werk Walthers*, 2008, 111–16; Hermann Reichert, *Walther von der Vogelweide für Anfänger*, 2009, 103–06.

¹⁶ Again, see the anthology *The Medieval Pastourelle*, trans. and ed. Paden, 1987.

the male poet knew exceedingly well how to present a female speaker, apparently drawing from Walther's model, insofar as she seems to be nubile and anxious to find love herself, which is indicated by the fact that she praises herself as an educated, or beautiful, young woman ("chint so wolgetan," 1, such a well-formed child) who knows just too well that she is liked by everyone ("do brist mich diu werlt al" (3; the entire world gave me praise). Almost for that very reason she turns to the treacherous meadow to pick flowers, and consequently that is also the very location where she is being deflowered.

Does she really mean to say "ein ungetan" (10; a rude man) when she is characterizing the rapist? Or is it only a subtle allusion to the poet himself, and his male audience, to cast into ironic light possible attacks by their girl-friends because of their own crude behavior and lack of politeness? Ultimately, CB 185 idealizes rape and presents it as a normal activity that an energetic man can and should pursue for his own happiness.

If we also consider CB 184 "Virgo quedam nobilis" we gain additional confirmation for the general observation that the goliards harbored little respect for women and enjoyed singing songs that drew from the genre of *pastourellas* and thereby idealized a form of sexual violence. The singer describes his female protagonist as a noble virgin who went to the forest to pick up some fire wood. Once having gathered enough, she creates a bundle and binds it together, but this bundle then breaks and falls apart because the binding opened up. The poet clearly intended the bundle of twigs as a metaphor of the woman who herself reveals an interest in sexual contacts, as confirmed by the refrain: "Heia, heia, wie si sanch! / cicha, cicha, wie sie sanch!" (1, 4–5; Hey, hey, how she sang, cicha, cicha, how she sang), concluding with the ambiguous phrase: "vincula, vincula, vincula rumpebat" (1, 6; the bond [or belt], the bond, the bond broke).

Can we say with certainty that she broke the bond, or rope, herself, as Benedikt Konrad Vollmann suggests in his translation: "die Fesseln sie zerriß"? The second stanza problematizes this assumption because we learn that a young man violated her honor, hence raped her: "der zetrant ir den bris" (2, 3; he took away her reputation). Whether she agreed with his sexual interests we cannot say for sure since the young woman never receives a voice. But we know that he "vuiench si bi der wizen hant, / er fuort si indas uogelsanch" (3, 1–2; took her by the white hand and led her away to where the birds were singing)—certainly a metaphorical expression of strongly erotic, sexual content. The last stanza emphasizes the force of the northerly wind that carried both far away deep into the forest, leaving us guessing about the ultimate meaning, though there is a preponderance of clues that imply that he forcefully took the young woman and had his pleasure with her because of the repeated imagery of breaking the bond of honor, the reference to his forceful action, and the power of the wind. Vollmann argued that the onomatopoeic exclamations in the refrain express the woman's sexual satisfaction,

as if the use of the verb 'zertrennen' in stanza 2, 3 would only have to be read as meaning that they both slept with each other.¹⁷ Rather, the refrain would have to be interpreted, just as in *CB* 185, as an exclamation of lament and grief over the loss of her honor because of the sexual transgression. After all, if we also take into account other songs in the *Carmina Burana*, the genre of the *pastourella* also implied the explicit possibility that the woman could, and did, say 'no,' and thus could fight the wooer off, as we find it in "Estivali sub feruore" (*CB* 79). There the man's best pleading leads to nothing because she simply rejects him and tells him to calm down: "parce nunc in hora!" (6, 6).

¹⁷ Vollmann, ed. and trans., *Carmina Burana*, 1987, 1206–07. But then he also interprets "aquilo" not only as the northerly wind, but also as the reckless man (1207), as confirmed by a quote in Hrabanus Maurus's *De universo* 9.25: "aquilo . . . significat . . . diabolum vel homines infideles, ut iniquitatis abundantium et defectum charitatis" (1207; The eagle symbolizes the devil or infidel people, just as injustice symbolizes abundance and shortness charity).

Chapter 6

Rape in Late-Medieval *Mæren*

The complex relationships among the genders, often determined by violent measures, found extraordinary expression in late-medieval verse narratives, such as in the *fabliaux*, *novelli*, or *mæren*. The latter, the focus of this chapter, were composed in Middle High German and began to appear sometime around the middle of the thirteenth century. One of the first authors was the otherwise biographically unknown The Stricker (Der Stricker [fl. ca. 1230–1260]; he also composed a unique Arthurian romance, *Daniel von dem Blühenden Tal*, and a variant of the *Chanson de Roland* or *Rolandslied* respectively, *Karl der Große*). He found countless successors who soon enough addressed a vast range of themes, motifs, and topics, regularly predicated on sexual, transgressive, satirical, or ironic approaches to the relationships of the two genders.

The meaning of the word *mære* was originally limited to the terms ‘news,’ ‘novelty,’ ‘excitement,’ also ‘account,’ or ‘tale.’ There is, however, a distinct difference between Middle High German *mære* and New High German *Märchen*, i.e., ‘fairy tale.’ By the thirteenth century, *mære* denotes the specific literary genre, and some of its most powerful representatives will be the center of our attention here. Following Hanns Fischer, *mæren* are rhymed verse narratives of relatively short length, comprising somewhere between 150 and 2000 verses, addressing, in terms of their content, fictive, secular, often erotic, but always social problems and concerns, consistently providing, as I would like to add, public entertainment through satire, irony, and sarcasm, depending on the individual case scenario.¹ There is no doubt that all efforts until today to reach a more precise definition have basically failed, especially since the term *mære* is used in so many other, mostly older contexts.² Nevertheless, despite all its ambivalence, we can safely resort to this label for a relatively large corpus of verse narratives since they all pursued, in

¹ Still seminal in its insightfulness and foundational value, see Fischer, *Studien*, 1968, 62–63. For a recent investigation of this genre, taking the wider European context into consideration, see Grubmüller, *Die Ordnung*, 2006.

² See also the commentary by Grubmüller, *Novellistik*, 1996, 1005–18.

one way or the other, both didactic and entertainment purposes, addressing a wide variety of gender relationships.

Mæren (pl.) have come down to us in large numbers, mostly in extensive collections, though we have no precise overview yet and can only estimate that there existed ca. 200 to 220 of them, composed sometime between 1250 and 1500. In the subsequent century, the popularity of these narratives did not abate, on the contrary, but they changed in format and appeared in prose, and these are identified then as *Schwänke* (jest narratives), related mostly by concretely identifiable authors by and large hailing socially from the middle class, the urban intelligentsia, members of the administration, students, and medical doctors.³

We would be hard pressed to determine the specific differences between *mæren* (Middle High German), “fabliaux” (Old French), and similar verse narratives, such as the Latin “*ridicula*,” disregarding, of course, the linguistic aspects, insofar as we are dealing with a very popular pan-European late-medieval literary phenomenon. The common element among all of them, whether in verse or prose, whether from the thirteenth or from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, can be determined as the combination of the two principles of *prodesse* and *delectare* in the Horatian sense. Witticism, surprise effects, sexual themes, often a certain degree of misogyny, and later occasionally even scatological elements, dominate this genre at a time when apparently the issue of gender relationships with all their difficulties especially within the framework of marriage gained prime importance in public discourse.⁴

As we know already from the “fabliaux,” and so from the narratives created by Boccaccio or Chaucer, witticism, intelligent behavior, upright morality and ethics, concern for harmonious and well-balanced relationships, and especially the interest in comic depictions of individuals and groups of people dominate the entire genre.⁵ Let us begin with the anonymous tale “The Knight with the Sparrow-Hawk”⁶ where the issue becomes problematic, raising the specter of rape in a dramatic fashion. Considering that this tale has survived in eleven manuscripts from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, the critical constellation

³ Röcke, “Fiktionale Literatur,” 2004, 463–506.

⁴ For the European perspective, see Clements and Gibaldi, *Anatomy*, 1977; Classen, *Der Liebes- und Ehediskurs*, 2005; id., “Gender Conflicts,” 2003, 65–92; Kocher, *Boccaccio*, 2005. For a good selection of early-modern representatives of this genre, see *Deutschsprachige Erzähler*, 1986. See also *Altdeutsches Decamerone*, 1982.

⁵ For a brief English introduction, a text selection in English translation, and a bibliography of the relevant studies on this genre, see *Erotic Tales*, 2009. Cf. also the solid survey and critical examination by Grubmüller, *Die Ordnung*, 2006. The genre of the *mære* was also thoroughly discussed by Fischer, *Die deutsche Märendichtung*, 1966; Schirmer, *Stil- und Motivuntersuchungen*, 1969; Strasser, *Vornovellistisches Erzählen*, 1989; Ziegeler, *Erzählen im Spätmittelalter*, 1985.

⁶ I will cite again from my translation in *Erotic Tales of Medieval Germany*, 2009, 95–99. For editions of the original text, see the bibliographical references there, 95.

involving a young knight and a very young woman, if not a girl, forces us to examine the relevance of the topic of rape here as well as an expression of public concerns regarding this type of crime in the High Middle Ages. We can only surmise when this narrative was created, and our best estimate points toward the late thirteenth century. The poet's language was considerably inspired by the Swabian/Alemannic poet Hartmann von Aue (ca. 1160–ca. 1200), so we assume that "The Knight with the Sparrow-Hawk" was created in the Alemannic area as well. The theme pursued here finds significant parallels in medieval European literature, such as in the Old French *fabliaux* "Dulciflorie" and Garin's "De la Grue," and in the anonymous "Du Heron," from the end of the thirteenth century.

The thematic framework proves to be quite simple and involves only three persons, a knight, a young oblate in a convent, and her aunt, the abbess. This *mære* is predicated on the fact that medieval monasteries and convents regularly accepted very young children as oblates who lived for the rest of their lives behind the convent walls. This practice was commonly observed and fulfilled an important function for noble families who wanted to find a secure place for one of their children in a religious institution without marrying him or her off, thereby guaranteeing that they had a representative within the Church who could pray on their behalf. This belief system must have been rather common, yet it also met with considerable criticism and satire, as the narrator indicates himself when referring to the entire group of oblates in the women's convent where the events take place: "They had such sweet lips that God could not refuse to fulfill what they asked and begged him, acting in good trust" (96). It would go too far to identify this satire as an explicit form of anticlericalism, but the institution of oblation seems to be the object of criticism after all.

The events in this narrative are quickly summarized and prove to be rather hilarious, though primarily from a male perspective. One day this young virgin observes a knight who passes by the convent riding on horseback, holding a sparrow-hawk on his hand. She is mightily amazed about the bird and immediately inquires about its nature. In fact, she would very much like to purchase it, but she owns practically nothing to pay for it. From her few questions the knight has already recognized her simple-mindedness and immediately pursues a sexual strategy, asking her for her *minne*, deliberately resorting to the technical term for courtly love with which she is not familiar at all (97). At first she dismisses the specific price that he had asked for, and offers, instead, some of her petty little treasures, such as a hair-band, dresses, a Psalter, and so forth. But he only wants her *minne*, and is ready to find it on her body himself without her assistance. Since this promises to be a very cheap barter, the young oblate is more than willing to accept the offer, as long as he would promise to lift her up onto the convent wall again afterwards.

Subsequently he sleeps with her twice, and she obviously enjoys it so much that she seriously encourages him to do it a third time because such a valuable bird as his sparrow-hawk deserves to be paid in full: "' . . . Take as much *minne* as you please. I have carefully counted [and find] that I have not granted you enough as payment, so take to your heart's content. Since I have to pay with *minne*, I trust that I will be able to pay properly. . . .'" (97). He is more than willing to oblige her in this, and afterwards he hands over the sparrow-hawk to her and helps her to get up to the wall again. So, seemingly, everything went to both their satisfaction, and she quickly runs to her aunt to tell her of the great bargain that did not even cost her one penny. Moreover, she gives the knight great praise for his skill in searching for *minne*, adding that she might miss this experience dearly "' . . . if I am to be deprived of his art for long. . . .'" (ibid.).

Of course, as to be expected, the abbess becomes very furious and badly beats her up because she fully understands what has happened to the young woman. The latter now begins to realize her error to have engaged in this barter, though without completely comprehending either the meaning of the sexual encounter (rape) or the reasons for her aunt's wrath. But she knows that she has to find a way to remedy the situation, so she eagerly awaits the opportunity to meet the knight again, which indeed happens eight days later. This time she begs the young man simply to reverse their barter, and to return the *minne* to her because she wants to appease the abbess according to whom she has "lost [her] honor because of the sparrow-hawk, and here also my virginity" (98). The knight, happily responding to this unforeseen opportunity for him to enjoy her love once again, fully complies with her wishes, sleeping with her first two times, but then, upon her demands to complete the reverse transaction fully, a third time: "It would be an unfair deal if you were to sneak away this way" (ibid.).

As soon as she has recovered her *minne*, as she foolishly believes, perhaps not comprehending even now that it refers to her virginity, she goes to see her aunt and relates everything that she had done to meet the monastic expectations. But she does not hold back with her opinion that this encounter with the knight was most pleasant for her, and that she does not really understand her aunt's anger with her. The young woman entirely fails to comprehend what 'virginity' truly means and assumes that her aunt has referred to some physical ailment as a result of losing her *minne*: "Even had he never returned to this part of the world, I would have survived what he did to me" (99). Ironically, however, the abbess now can only be resigned to the most unwelcome and unfortunate outcome, and laments that this damage to her niece had been done not once, but twice. In fact, now she blames herself, yet without fully reaching the appropriate conclusion, that is, to enlighten the young woman about all the aspects relevant to sexuality. Instead, she only reflects upon her failure to respond properly to the first instance (ibid.).

She does not explain to the oblate what the differences between men and women are and how a woman would have to try to protect herself from unsolicited sexual contacts. All she has to say is that her niece suffered “damage” (ibid.), whereas in reality the young woman was actually raped. But this interpretation, if correct, requires more extensive considerations of the actual context and of the basis for the satire that is directed at the institution of monasticism.⁷ Certainly, the narrator limits himself to general statements concerning the grave danger of the awakening of the erotic and love in young people: “Those who listened to my account should pay attention to my advice: he who discovers a fire should be careful not to be burned by it” (99). Next, he remarks that people need to know how to distinguish between good and evil as the precondition for protecting one’s honor, so even here we immediately get a sense of an abusive sexual encounter.⁸ As we would say today, she suffered from statutory rape, but the abbess treats her not as a victim, but as a perpetrator: “The old woman began to chastise her, tore out her hair, and beat her as punishment for having made this purchase” (98).

In other words, the abbess fully understands her own responsibility because, first, she had failed in her supervision, and, second, because she had actually beaten the young woman so badly. Indirectly, yet unmistakably, the third reason that had made the rape possible was the abbess’s failure to introduce her niece to the world and to provide her with the necessary instructions. Apparently, the latter must have learned some aspects by herself, though she had acquired only fragmentary knowledge. Otherwise she would not have responded so enthusiastically to the sight of the sparrow-hawk and prove to be immediately willing to accept the knight’s offer. Considering all those circumstances, the oblate is not really to be blamed for what has happened to her.

We encounter a very similar situation in “The Little Bunny Rabbit,” originally contained only in one manuscript, Staatsbibliothek, cod. A 94 d. Johanniterbibliothek, Strassbourg, which unfortunately burned down in the fire of 1870. Thematically it is related also to the Old French *fabliaux* “La Grue” and “Le Héron,” and to the Middle High German *mære* “Dulceflorie.”⁹

⁷ De Rentis, “Die ‘Gesetze der Jugend’,” 2009, 61–64.

⁸ See the *mære* “The Monk with the Little Goose,” cited from *Erotic Tales of Medieval Germany*, 2009, 73–76, where a similarly naive young monk, after having experienced a sexual encounter with the daughter of an inn-keeper, but believing, following the abbot’s own words, that she was nothing but a goose, recommends the abbot to procure such geese for all monks during Christmas time: “. . . you should not forget, my dear lord, to let each man have a little goose. Then everyone here will have the greatest joy they can ever have here on earth and beyond” (76). The same situation dealing with an individual’s linguistic incompetence because of a lack of education also appears in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*; see Dina De Rentis, “Die ‘Gesetze der Jugend’,” 2009, 53–74, esp. 61–64.

⁹ Here I quote the text from the English translation by Maurice Sprague, again in *Erotic Tales of Medieval Germany*, 2009, 35–41. Fischer, *Studien*, 1968, 97, contextualizes this narrative poignantly

Whereas in “The Knight with the Sparrow-Hawk” the seduction, or perhaps rape, is made possible because the victim belongs to a convent, in “The Little Bunny Rabbit” the sexual perpetration happens in a village, but again the ‘rape’ occurs because a young woman, ignorant of the ways of this world, encounters a knight who owns an animal that appeals so much to her that she cannot resist the temptation to acquire it at all costs. This time the knight is not only accompanied by two hounds and a sparrow-hawk, but he can also capture, with the help of one of his farm-hands, a little bunny rabbit. Much more explicitly than in the previous narratives, we are informed immediately of the animal’s erotic symbolism since the knight quickly decides to take it to his beloved “who had long refused him and for whom his passionate desire smoldered with hot longing” (36).

Once the knight has arrived in the next village, he encounters a young peasant girl who immediately spies the animal and wants to purchase it (36). The knight immediately utilizes this unique situation to seduce the young woman and demands nothing but *minne* as a price for the animal. Once again, however, as in the previous tales, she does not understand the meaning of the word and first offers him instead all kinds of objects in her treasure coffer, including “... a small belt of silk stitched with gold—my mother sewed red and white pearls on it with all of her diligence and masterful skill. . .” (36).

The narrator emphasizes how much her erotic attraction utterly overwhelms the knight since “such arms have prevailed over countless armies and every king” (ibid.). Apparently, the girl also enjoys the sexual experience, as she “blossomed into summer” (ibid.), and so she encourages him to search for *minne* a third time, in close parallel to the previous cases. Nothing seems to satisfy her, as she calls out after him when he finally disappears without having taken her up on her offer. This evokes laughter in the knight, and the entire situation concludes apparently to the full satisfaction of both sides. Nevertheless, we have to be careful and should not allow the superficial textual strategies blind us to the underlying structural elements and deep-seated meaning.

In reality, as the mother’s reaction shows just too well as soon as she has returned home from church and then has learned from her daughter about the most dubious barter, and as the narrator also seems to indicate in a subtle manner, here we face, once again, the situation of rape, or at least egregious sexual abuse. The mother reveals through her initial reaction how much the little bunny truly represents erotic love, worthy for a bridegroom (38). To her horror, however, then she understands the way her daughter actually acquired the animal, which was the worst possible, giving away her virginity to an unknown man. Exactly like the

in the thematic category of “Verführung und erotische Naivität” (Seduction and erotic naiveté). But the concrete term to be used here would really be ‘rape,’ or at least ‘abuse by resorting to cunning and deceptive language.’ See also Classen, “Erotic Symbolism,” 2008, 87–104.

abbess in the previous narrative, this mother then resorts to violence, though similarly without explaining anything and only indicating through physical force that this phenomenon of *minne* represents something unfathomably dangerous that one cannot simply give away.

Following the well-known pattern, the young woman tries to recover her virginity, and when she detects the knights, she demands the reversal of their barter, to which the man happily obliges. So he rapes, or abuses her, a second time. But the maid demonstrates once again that she still has not understood in the slightest the meaning of what had happened to her because she does not complain to him about her loss of sexual innocence, hence her virginity. Instead she bitterly laments the suffering at her mother's hand only (38).

Amazingly, however, during the second sexual encounter the young woman does not even bother to look at him, and does not express any interest in him; instead all her interest is focused on the bunny (ibid.). Does she perhaps express grief over the loss of this most cherished animal? Why would she have been so obsessed by it in the first place? And why did the knight feel so delighted himself when he had gotten hold of the bunny out in the field at the beginning of the narrative? Moreover, the girl's mother was also impressed about it when she first saw it in her daughter's arms.

Finally, when the maid and her mother at the end arrive at the castle to participate in the knight's wedding, they bring the bunny rabbit with them upon the young man's explicit wish (39). That sight, however, provokes in him another peal of laughter, so loud that the entire wedding company notices it and wants to learn the truth behind it. Of course, he has to keep it a secret, but his fiancée finally forces him to reveal the entire story, yet this brings about her own downfall because she then scoffs at the girl's stupidity having forgotten to hide from her mother what the knight had done to her. She herself had slept with their estate's chaplain more than a hundred times, without her mother ever having found out about it. Horrified, the knight realizes his fiancée's moral depravity, quickly changes his mind, consults with his friends, and then decides to marry the peasant girl instead.

Altogether, the little hare carries a considerable symbolic weight and would deserve further critical investigation, for which there is no room here. The crucial point, however, proves to be that this bunny facilitates and brings about the sexual encounters, robbing the maid of her virginity and honor. We are certainly supposed to laugh about her, together with the knight, insofar as she does not understand what has happened to her in reality and actually believes that *minne* can be bartered, can be given away and be retrieved again in terms of an economic exchange. But the bunny also reflects the girl's innocence and utter ignorance, which basically makes her a victim, both of the knight and her own mother. No one tells her clearly and in explicit terms what might be expected of her and what

the bunny truly means. The knight seduces her sexually, and her mother beats her up full of wrath over her daughter's mean-spirited abuse. After the alleged return of *minne*, the mother wants to tear out her daughter's hair again (39), and she loudly laments her loss of virginity and reputation. However, this time the daughter calms her down and assures her that she feels happy about the outcome (39).

To what extent did the knight exert physical, or psychological, violence? Does he really rape her, that is, violently rob her of her virginity? Quite similarly to all the previous *mæren*, we cannot answer in the positive. The narrative is determined by a light tone of voice without any real concern for the young woman's destiny, if not suffering, at the knight's hand. In fact, there is a certain element borrowed from the *pastourella* with its focus on a knight's ability to seduce and sleep with a shepherdess, similarly to the song in the *Carmina Burana* (see above). Of course, the outcome of this "mære," with the knight even marrying the girl, seems to contradict this interpretation, but the entire set-up with a powerful nobleman who owns a most attractive object or animal respectively, and the seductive power of the barter that he offers to the female partner who ultimately cannot say 'no' because of the subtle but forceful constraints speak a powerful language. As the knight in "The Little Bunny Rabbit" indicates through his laughter, the intended comedy was certainly not predicated on the idea of rape. Nevertheless, at closer analysis there is no alternative but to identify the knight's action and performance as those of a rapist, even if 'only' in the sense of serious abuse, irrespective of the woman's foolishness, ignorance, or despair over her own husband's social, that is, knightly, shortcomings.

The narrator in "The Little Bunny Rabbit" makes the most serious effort to depict the young knight as a sympathetic figure who seems to be just as naive as the maid, simply taking whatever he might stumble upon in sexual terms. After all, at the end he even marries the peasant girl and thus remedies his infraction. As his advisors all comment, "he should rightly marry the young beauty with the bunny rabbit if he wanted to pursue what was correct and honorable" (41). In other words, they evaluate his previous behavior toward the maid as dishonorable and see only one solution to compensate for his criminal action, that is, to marry her, which was very much in conformity with medieval law regarding how to punish a rapist.¹⁰ Altogether, then, even he must be identified as a perpetrator who had abused the young and innocent woman for his own purposes.

¹⁰ Saar, "Notzucht," 1993, 1298–99, offers a concise overview of the various medieval laws concerning rape, and distinguishes also between sexual violence committed against an honorable woman (married, virgin, etc.), which constituted rape, and the same violence against a dishonorable woman ("mulier communis"), such as a prostitute.

This does not mean that the narrators specifically intended their tales as a literary platform to launch a broad criticism against rape and date rape. But the circumstances determine that a severe transgression has occurred which, in a real life scenario, would have to be pursued most seriously, that is as a crime. Of course, in "The Little Bunny Rabbit" the social distance between both classes is so huge that we might even think that for the knight this little escapade with the girl would not matter much at all, at least according to the teachings of Andreas Capellanus in his *De ars amatoria* (ca. 1190). But even this proves to be incorrect insofar as the knight agrees to the barter only on the condition that they cannot be observed by anyone: "If there is someone around here who could hear or see us, then I can't take it, you have to be alone" (37). In other words, he fully knows that sleeping with her in exchange for the rabbit, or under any other circumstance, would represent rape, so he does not want any witnesses. This then explains his laughter when he rides away because not only does he not find her pleas that he should sleep with her even one more time not only delightful, very much meeting his own sexual desires overall, though no longer in this concrete situation, but he is also relieved that his impromptu plan worked out so well and that he could enjoy this sexual experience so easily in exchange for nothing but the bunny rabbit.

In "The Sparrow-Hawk" and "The Little Bunny Rabbit" each time the elderly woman figure (aunt/abbess vs. mother) immediately resorts to violence out of deep frustration that she herself could not prevent the rape of her niece or her daughter, respectively. The opposite, however, could also be the case, as when a male oblate encounters a young woman in the outside world, who at night abuses his ignorance and foolishness to sneak into his bed and to seduce him to have sex with her against the strict vow of chastity that he had taken ("The Monk with the Little Goose," 73–76). But this would not change our observation that, more generally speaking, rape still has occurred because none of the women, and so also the male oblate, could say 'no' and allowed the other person to impose him/herself upon the victim.

Certainly, the medieval audience might not quite have read these narratives along these lines, particularly because of the explicit utilization of erotic humor, but intratextual clues and the context each time reveal that the anonymous authors had in mind to develop specific scenes in which the young, innocent person (female or male) is overpowered and has to succumb to rape. Although the man in each narrative resorts only to soft bribery, and simply utilizes the opportunity, the young woman would not have agreed and would have opposed his suggestions if she had fully understood the implications. After all, each time when the mother or the aunt subsequently learns what has happened, she brutally punishes the girl and reprimands her severely for having lost her virginity, her honor, and her innocence. Of course, the audience was invited to laugh about the foolish girls (and the young man), and there is no sense that we are supposed to

feel pity for the victim of sexual violence. So it would be a wrong reading to claim that the writers intended to invoke concrete criticism of male behavior that results in a form of rape.

On the contrary, however, the very satire and irony of these *mæren* suggest that rape was regarded as a form of crime that happened quite regularly, and if a young ignorant girl became the victim of sexual violence because of her utter ignorance of real life conditions, then she was ridiculed. Nevertheless, behind the comic elements there still emerges a clear awareness of the drastic consequences of rape to the poor victims.

Finally, let us investigate another example where rape is highly problematized. Heinrich Kaufringer, citizen of Landsberg am Lech near Augsburg in southern Germany, can be regarded as one of the best authors of *mæren*, but unfortunately we know hardly anything about him in biographical terms and can only be certain that he flourished around 1400. Two figures with this specific name appear in the documents from Landsberg, one the father of the other, but again it remains elusive for us to determine who of them composed these texts. Documents in the Augsburg archives mention several people with the name Kaufringer, but none specifying them with the first name 'Heinrich.'¹¹ Perhaps we are dealing with a larger merchant family, and Heinrich Kaufringer would simply be a relative in Landsberg.

One of Kaufringer's verse narratives, "Der feige Ehemann" (The Coward Husband), will allow us to probe deeper the meaning of rape within the context of the previous accounts where physical force is actually absent but where bribery or social pressure provide the necessary framework to coerce the woman to grant access to her body to an unwelcome suitor.¹² The situation here is most curious, yet powerfully reveals the complexity of the matter and how easily sexual violence could result in many different situations. The narrator begins with some reflections on the preference to accept a small evil rather than a big one, or to lose a hand and a foot instead of being executed for a crime.¹³

In many *mæren* the female protagonist proves to be an outstanding, highly reputable married lady who suffers at the hand of male machinations but can, normally, preserve her honor because of her steadfast character, strength of personality, and a virtuous lifestyle. This is the case in "Der feige Ehemann" as well, where an extraordinarily beautiful Strasbourg woman is married to a

¹¹ For further details, see Stede, *Schreiben in der Krise*, 1993, 219–37. See also Willers, "Heinrich Kaufringer," 2001, offers pleasant, but not innovative interpretations of most of Kaufringer's *mæren*.

¹² Kaufringer, *Werke*, I, 1972, 73–80.

¹³ For further literary-historical comments, see Grubmüller, ed., *Novellistik*, 1996, 1269–72.

wealthy burgher. Her reputation spreads throughout the entire city community, and one day a knight learns about her as well. The narrator mocks him right away, calling him a “lantfarer” (46; traveler, perhaps vagrant) who tends to sleep with a lot of different women and so displays little honor. Once he has encountered the admirable lady, he tries his best to seduce her, but quickly finds her resistance too strong for him. He employs every trick in his bag, so to speak, but she remains steadfast, though she finds his wooing so bothersome, even threatening, that she complains one day to her husband about the knight, hoping that this will put a stop to all that harassment.¹⁴

Curiously, instead of confronting the knight directly, the husband encourages his wife to invite the knight in and to pretend as if she were willing to commit adultery with him. In the meantime he would hide behind a barrel in the room and would come out in time and punish the other so seriously that he would learn a lesson for the rest of his life (73–80). The plan seems to work well; the knight arrives dressed as a lover would be, so not protected in any particular way. The husband, by contrast, wears a strong armor and believes to be in a powerful position to scare the opponent out of his wits.

Shortly before the crucial moment in the bed the lady wonders aloud whether her lover does not fear for his life, since he wears nothing but soft clothing that is usually worn at a dance (130–33). Her relatives and friends might learn about this tryst and could attack him. The young man calms her down, however, insisting that he has so much strength that he would not have to worry about any enemies. To demonstrate this strength, the knight takes out his dagger, which he praises for its extraordinary quality, and then slashes it through a very strong suit of armor that he had found hanging at the wall, an armor consisting of six layers of metal.

The husband, who has listened to every word exchanged between these two people, trembles at the thought of fighting against such a fierce young man, and so he frightfully abstains completely from making any move. The knight, however, then lifts up the wife, carries her to the bed, and rapes her in the concrete sense of the word since she struggles hard to defend herself and to push him away. Indeed, the poor woman suffers from this profound humiliation and is left entirely helpless, basically abandoned by her own husband (205–10).

The narrator leaves no doubt that the knight uses force and cares little about her resistance: “mit seiner sterk er si da zwang, / das er si da überraung, / das sein will da ward volbracht” (211–13; with his strength he forced her and wrestled her down, fulfilling his own wish). Once the sexual act is over, she is crying bitterly (219) because she knows that she has lost her honor and was raped. We can also assume that she feels deeply disappointed about her husband, who performed so

¹⁴ For source studies, see Euling, *Studien*, 1900, 69–70. The original title, as used by Euling, is “Das Schädlein.”

miserably as a coward. The knight does not understand the reasons for her tears and tries to console her, but there is no use since she feels hostile against him and does not grant him any good word. On the contrary: “si redt mit im gar scharpflich, / das er von dannen machet sich / gar mit trurigem muot zwar” (227–29; she used so sharp words that he left her with a very sad mind).¹⁵

The real conflict, however, only erupts subsequently because the wife then turns to her husband once the knight has left her, and lambasts him bitterly for having abandoned her so pathetically (241–43). But he appeals to her pity because he felt mortally afraid of the knight and did not dare to attack him because it would have resulted in his own death. Moreover, he assures her that in his eyes she has not lost anything of her honor (253–54), and he begs her not to think too lowly of him because he had only tried to protect his own life. If he had challenged the knight, the latter would have probably killed him, despite his own good armor (264–65). The husband accepts that she has suffered from having been raped, but he regards this only as a small damage, whereas his own death would have been a great calamity, which seems to reflect as well the narrator’s opinion, who had voiced the same idea in the beginning of the *mære*. She could easily recover from this one time sexual violence, while the fight with the knight would probably have left him dead (371).¹⁶

At this point, however, the narrator intervenes and emphasizes that this attitude can be supported and yet also be criticized. If the husband had come out from his hiding place behind the barrel, without hurting the knight, then the situation would not have escalated into violence (276–80). In fact, then she would not have been exposed to the rape: “und war auch da kain schädlein / an der lieben frawen sein” (281–82; there would not have been any damage to his dear wife). Kaufringer even criticizes the husband and accuses him of having resorted to a deceptive strategy that could only be detrimental to him because he had tried to solve the case in the privacy of his home without having enough courage or wit to handle it properly (284–87).

The counter example is also provided by Kaufringer in his narrative “Bürgermeister und Königssohn,” although it does not deal with rape.¹⁷ When a mayor discovers his wife and the foreigner together in a bath tub, he does not resort to violence, but shames his competitor through a skillful diplomatic maneuver and

¹⁵ Kaufringer might have borrowed the motif for his tale from the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, but there are, though more removed, two Italian accounts that also bear some similarities; see Stiefel, “Zu den Quellen,” 1903, 497–506.

¹⁶ Scholarship has mostly concentrated on the seeming contradiction between the introductory motto and the outcome of the sexual encounter with the wife having been raped, but ignored the actual case, the knight’s criminal transgression and the husband’s miserable failure. See Grubmüller, *Die Ordnung*, 2006, 183–84, with further references there.

¹⁷ Kaufringer, *Werke*, I, 1972, no. 4, 41–52.

can thus overcome the problem in a most honorable fashion. In fact, no sexual penetration has yet occurred, and the young man feels deeply embarrassed, which also helps to solve the situation amenable.¹⁸ Ultimately, the husband is identified as the true perpetrator, that is, as responsible for the crime that takes place in his own home, for which Kaufringer even wishes him misfortune until the end of his life (292–95).

Did the knight intend to rape the woman? The answer is simply negative, at least in the first phase because he honestly wooed her, appealed to her, and asked her to listen to his request and to fulfill his sexual wishes; finally, as he had to interpret it, she acquiesced and even invited him into her house. In other words, he had hoped to convince her of his love and hence to grant him sexual pleasures, not however, by way of violence! But the situation is not that easy because in the decisive moment she vehemently fights back, screams at the top of her lungs, and tries everything in her power to stop him. However, the knight does not take her verbal and physical ‘no’ as an answer and proceeds violently against her; hence he rapes her after all (211–12).

Moreover, the narrator had initially characterized him as a “lantfarer” (46), that is, as an unsteady person with no home base, constantly on the move, a hunter for women: “er pruchet seinen werden leib / oft und vil durch schöne weib, / den er dienet fruo und spat” (47–49; he often and intensively served beautiful women with his whole body, both early and late [i.e., the whole time]). Insofar as he belongs to the knightly class, we cannot identify him with the vast group of social outcasts or marginal figures, such as goliards, vagabonds, beggars, entertainers, etc.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the fact that the narrator associates him with “lantfarer” (pl.) indicates a subtle irony, if not criticism, because this knight has no specific moral concerns and cares little about marital *mores*, ethics, and other urban ideals. For him the wife proves to be an ideal object of prey, and he makes every possible effort to convince her to sleep with him. Although she refuses to listen to him, he does not hold back in his efforts to flatter her, to talk to her, and to joke with her (54–57), although he only receives negative signals from this honorable woman (58–60).

Surprisingly, when she finally complains bitterly to her husband about this sexual harassment, he suggests, at least at the beginning, the very opposite response of what she might have expected from him. Instead of assuring her that he would stand up for her and stop the knight in mid-course by confronting him publicly, he wants his wife to play a secret game, to invite the knight in and to

¹⁸ Euling, *Studien*, 1900, 62–65.

¹⁹ For a complex discussion of the mobile people in the Middle Ages, including those of noble background, see Schubert, *Fahrendes Volk*, 1995, 6–19. To identify, however, mobility as a crucial, even constitutive, aspect of medieval society, as proposed by Schubert, cannot be maintained.

pretend that she would be willing to grant him sex. Insofar as she fully trusts her husband, she complies and carries out her part of this ill-conceived plan, suddenly playing the stereotypical role of the sexually frustrated wife who is delighted to find a noble lover outside of her marriage.²⁰ But in the course of events she is badly disappointed by her husband because his cowardice eventually prevents him from stepping in and interrupting the knight's attempts to sleep with his wife. This finds additional confirmation in subtle yet clearly recognizable clues as to the knight's sexual prowess over her husband's possible impotence.

Once the knight has entered the secret room with the wife, she claims to worry about his safety, considering that he has only a knife (dagger?) with him that could not help him much to defend himself against possible attackers (her husband) (147–49). The narrator emphasizes that she is speaking in a loud voice about this knife in order to encourage her husband hidden behind a barrel to come out and to fight boldly against the intruder (150–52).

As Marga Stede observes, however, this very attempt on her part triggers the next, rather unexpected development, basically tragic for the wife.²¹ To put all her concerns to rest, the knight demonstrates quickly that he possesses extraordinary strength, and, more importantly, that his knife is much sharper, or should we say, more potent, than she might believe (161–62). To illustrate his claim, he stabs it through the solid armor, which, as we have learned already, terrifies the husband so much that he refrains from carrying out his plan and allows the knight to rape his wife. But this stabbing could easily be read as a metaphor of sexual penetration, or as an expression of how he would powerfully penetrate the wife. So, when the knight confirms at the end: "... : 'mein tegen ist vil guot'" (173; my sword is very good), he obviously also argues that his sexual potency is considerable, and certainly much higher than the husband's.²²

²⁰ Kaufringer dealt with this topic as well, see his *mære* "Bürgermeister und Königssohn," (No. 4, 41–52), there, however, with the most interesting twist that the knight is the son of the French king and that the burger's wife had invited him on her own. Moreover, the husband proves to be bold and honorable, enters the room where the two take a bath, removes their clothing, then brings them delicate food, and invites them to eat with him. But he begs the foreign man to take the money that he allegedly receives from every married woman and every maid in return for sexual services from him instead; hence he wants him never to barter sex with his wife again. The prince is deeply ashamed because he had lied jokingly, and now he promises, having revealed his identity, never to do that again. He emphasizes that nothing dishonorable has happened to his wife, and he pledges to the burgher never to woo his wife again. Paying the greatest respect to the husband, he promises him toll- and tax-free status in his country where he is earning his living as a merchant. Kaufringer greatly praises those people who do not act irrationally and avoid rash and inconsiderate behavior, which also proves to be the basis for a solid marriage.

²¹ Stede, *Schreiben in der Krise*, 1996, 63.

²² Note the significant change of words here from "messer" (147; knife) to "tegen" (170; sword). Moreover, the knight does not simply pull out his weapon; instead: "auß zucket er den tegen sein" (170; he [rapidly] pulled out his sword). Late medieval literature is filled with sexual metaphors

From the knight's perspective, this sexual tryst does not constitute rape since she had invited him in and had thus accepted his wooing, almost like a contract, as in the case of *Mauritius von Craûn*. But he does not pay any attention to her screaming and defense mechanism when he forces her onto the bed, and he seems to assume that her odd behavior, at least in his eyes, might be typical of all women who pretend not to want sex and fight the lover, but in reality desire to be overcome by him, a typically male thinking that usually leads to date rape.²³ However, the narrator explicitly condemns this sexual affair as rape, at least in the epimythion, in which he basically contradicts his own introductory maxim: "Da dem weib der ungemach / von dem ritter so geschach . . ." (217–18; when the knight committed this violation against the woman . . .).²⁴ And he describes in unequivocal terms that she was furious and angry, feeling deeply hurt, or violated and raped (228).

But in a way she has been 'raped' by her husband as well, if we may say so metaphorically speaking, because he had made her welcome the knight in secret and pretend that she was in love with him, hence would be willing to sleep with this wooer. Later there is a great degree of anger in her, feeling badly abused and betrayed by him. Even the narrator is on her side when he characterizes the husband, rather sarcastically, as "küenen weigant" (237; bold warrior), using a term that he borrowed from the world of heroic epics, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, for explicitly satirical purposes. The miserable burgher is still squatting in his hiding place²⁵ long after the knight has left, idly holding the sword in his hand, being heavily armored (238–39), inviting mockery and laughter because of his foolishness. All his weapon and defensive equipment were useless because of his cowardice, and he rather allowed his wife to be raped than to fight for her courageously.

For Kaufringer, although he contradicts himself, considering the initial maxim that a small damage is always preferable over a great damage, this proves to be a

based on weapons, especially knives, swords, and other oblong objects; see Müller, *Schwert und Scheide*, 1988.

²³ See the theoretical reflections in the chapter on *Mauritius von Craûn*. Date rape is currently discussed from many perspectives and is regarded as a major problem in gender relationships, see Ward, *Acquaintance*, 1994; *Vom Date zum Rape*, 2002; Lindquist, *The Essential Guide*, 2007.

²⁴ Stede, *Schreiben in der Krise*, 1996, 65, emphasizes the aporia that emerges out of the narrative constellation, placing the husband's desire to survive even at the cost of having his wife raped by the knight in conflict with the moral and ethical condemnation of the knight's behavior, not to speak of the narrator's attack against the husband as a coward and disloyal husband. See also Friedrich, "Metaphorik," 1996, 1–30; Röcke, "schade und market," 1988, 310–11, curiously argues that for Kaufringer the individual struggle to achieve personal goals in the world of early-modern urban life and the market irrespective of the suffering that is thereby imposed on others finds expression in this narrative, as if the wife's rape did not matter.

²⁵ Grubmüller, ed., *Novellistik*, 1996, translates "vas" as "chest," but it would really be a 'barrel,' which might carry further meaning considering the erotic symbolism of the barrel.

very weak, ultimately not defensible position (275). Consequently, as the narrator emphasizes, the husband ends up with "schand und laster" (287; dishonor and disrespect), and he is dismissed as an utter failure because he set up a situation for his wife in which the knight could easily rape her, without he himself having the inner strength and character to step up to the proverbial plate and fight for his wife's protection and honor (288–91). He had prepared a trap for the knight, but was, as the proverb says, really caught in it himself, thereby victimizing his own wife.

The parallels with and differences to *Mauritius von Craûn* are self-evident, but for our conclusion let us summarize those quickly. Whereas in the latter narrative the lady shows distinct interest in her knight's wooing and even promises him her love if he organizes a tournament for her to watch, in Kaufringer's "Der feige Ehemann" the wife has no interest in the knight at all and is only coerced to accept him as a lover by her own husband who thinks that he can teach his opponent a lesson with the kinds of weapons usually wielded and practiced by members of the noble class. The parallel, on the other hand, proves to be the criticism of the weak, impotent, coward husband who plays a miserable role both times and can do nothing to prevent the 'rape' of his wife. And both times the male protagonist does not understand the damage that he causes through his violent behavior, or, that he is actually raping his lady. Mauritius leaves the bedroom full of anger, without ever returning to his lady; the knight in "Der feige Ehemann" crudely 'rapes' his lady, disregarding all her screaming and fighting against him, and he does not even understand why she changed her mind so abruptly. In fact, he departs from her in a rather sad mood and utterly puzzled, not grasping why the wife is so furious at him (230–32). Not one of the two male protagonists demonstrates any sensitivity, and both prove to be utterly ignorant that their action actually led to, or constituted, rape.

By contrast, and most importantly, however, in both narratives, as in many others (see above), the narrators specifically explore the situations determining their tales and expose the degree to which the female characters are, indeed, raped by (at first) welcome or unwelcome lovers. The situation is even aggregated in the last tale because the husband must be identified as the true culprit who foolishly set up the situation, falsely assuming that he would be strong enough to give the young man a solid beating. To assume, as Klaus Grubmüller does, that the author in a way cynically condones the knight's raping of the wife, completely ignores the final words with which the narrator severely reprimands the husband and laments the victimization of the wife.²⁶

²⁶ In this respect I still prefer the concise reading by Euling, *Studien*, 1900, 69–70, exposing the husband's utter failure and identifying the sexual abuse the poor wife has to suffer.

I do not want to conclude without referring again to the interesting parallel in the French *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (ca. 1460)²⁷ and expand my previous analysis in the Introduction. In the fourth novella a Scottish mercenary in the service of the French king finds himself in the same situation, wooing a burgher's wife who eventually invites him in upon her husband's own urging in order to teach the sexual competitor a strong lesson.²⁸ The Scot also demonstrates his physical strength at the crucial moment, swinging his sword through the air and uttering most threatening words against the imagined husband who is actually hidden behind a curtain and does not intervene when the other man then rapes his wife. After the mercenary has left the room, a fight breaks out between the couple, but then the Scotsman returns and rapes the wife a second time, while her husband seeks cover under the bed upon which the sexual union takes place. This emphasizes the coward's impotence even further. Although he later hardly dares to come out of his hiding place, he then angrily yells at his wife and accuses her of disloyalty and lack of morality, and in fact claims that she enjoyed the sexual encounter because she should have been able to stop the young man and fight him off. The husband is obviously trying to compensate for his own feelings of weakness, incompetence, and weakness, especially because the rape took place right above his head. But the wife is not a submissive person and vehemently argues back, accusing her husband of having failed utterly in protecting her against being raped.

The narrator offers her his support in the final comment and blames the husband of having wronged his own wife by forcing her to invite the Scottish mercenary in to her house: "Mais le verdict conclut aux torts du mari qui fut bafoué par l'Écossais — et le resta — de la manière qui vous a été rapportée . . ." (48; "But at any rate, the husband was cuckolded and deceived by the Scot in the manner you have heard").²⁹ Considering the context, we might go so far as to formulate the hypothesis that in the final analysis the Scot really rapes the husband, of whose presence he must have been aware upon his return, whereas the wife proves to be only the conduit for this maneuver. If we reflect upon the curious situation in Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône* once again, we might discover a common

²⁷ *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, 1991, "La Terrible vengeance du vaillant mercier" (no. 4), 45–48.

²⁸ Grubmüller, ed., *Novellistik*, 1996, 1270–72, also refers to other similar tales, including those in the Indian *Pantschatantra* and in its Latin translation, the *Gesta Romanorum*. Kaufringer might have been familiar with the motif from the fifth tale of the third day in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as Grubmüller suggests, but the similarities consist only in the concept of a wager in which a husband basically abandons his wife to a lover without understanding that he has deceived himself.

²⁹ The English translation is from Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie*, 1899, now online at www.gutenberg.org/files/18575/18575.txt (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011).

thread in many of these rape accounts, where the ultimate victim seems to be the husband. But I leave this for future investigations.

Altogether, in the world of *mæren*, and so, of course, also in the world of late-medieval verse narratives at large, rape was not an uncommon occurrence, as a number of the authors deliberately explored the meaning of rape and illustrated the drastic consequences for the victimized women, explicitly expressing their sympathies. There is no doubt that the use of sexual violence was clearly treated as transgression, hence as rape. In other words, the *mæren* authors formulated unequivocal condemnation of this crime, though they also indicated that they knew of no good strategies of how to protect women, especially when their husbands failed to live up to the expectations. Insofar as they allowed their audiences to laugh about such foolish situations, however, they also diminished the actual impact on the female victims in psychological and physical terms. They were certainly not feminists, and it would also be difficult to claim that they truly wanted to defend women's rights in the modern sense of the word. Nevertheless, in their narratives they unmistakably expressed strong opposition against sexual violence and severely reprimanded the perpetrators; hence they warned their male audience not to think of women in their social environment as nothing but chattel and easy prey. Both social and legal measures, and then also ethical and moral criteria clearly stood in the way, and these narratives brilliantly outline the limits that separate the genders and what inalienable rights the individual possesses; this also expressly so in sexual terms.

Chapter 7

Rape in the World of the Peasant Class in the Late Middle Ages Heinrich Wittenwiler's *Ring*

In the Middle Ages, and probably far beyond as well, aristocrats and their audiences held a rather low opinion about peasants and the world of agriculture. Certainly, many times the illustrators of Books of Hours portrayed the rural existence in almost idyllic images, but the reality was certainly very different. For instance, the *Luttrell Psalter* from the first half of the fourteenth century in England, created for Lord Geoffrey Luttrell of Irnham in Lincolnshire, presents us charming perspectives on many different activities in the rural domain, and the overall impression conveys a sense of peacefulness, happiness, and tranquility, probably deeply influenced by classical-ancient value concepts, such as expressed in Virgil's *Georgics* (29 C.E.). As Janet Backhouse observes, "So lively are its characterizations that it is almost impossible to resist the temptation to regard them as real portraits of the household figures mentioned in Sir Geoffrey's will. The manuscript can certainly be associated with a particular part of the country"¹ The same observation applies to many other late-medieval illustrated manuscripts, especially Books of Hours with their famous depictions of the months of the year characterized by those activities necessary in agriculture, such as the famous one produced by the Limbourg Brothers for the Duke of Berry.²

But as we have learned in many different respects, and especially already in the previous chapters, quite contrary to the many idyllic images of life in the countryside, the economic conditions for farmers were rather harsh and difficult, irrespective of the aestheticizing efforts by contemporary artists.³ Perhaps not quite surprisingly, male members of the nobility were even encouraged at time,

¹ Backhouse, *Medieval Rural Life*, 2000, 60. See also Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, [2003].

² *Die Brüder van Limburg*, 2005, catalogue for the exhibit there from 8–28–2005 to 11–20–2005. Husband, *The Art of Illumination*, 2008. See also Michael Toch's collection of his own articles in id., *Peasants and Jews*, 2003.

³ See, for instance, the illustrations of the *Roman de la rose* carried out by Robinet Testard (fl. 1471–1531), "Jupiter Sowing," 1485 (Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Douce 195, 143); cf. Friedman, "The Art of the Exotic," 2008, 184–85.

if they so desired, to take their sexual pleasure with peasant women. As already Andreas Capellanus, addressing an aristocratic audience, comments in his Latin treatise *De amore* (ca. 1190), perhaps satirically, reflecting about possible sexual relationships with peasant women, "For you can hardly soften their outward inflexibility so far that they will grant you their embraces quietly or permit you to have the solaces you desire unless first you use a little compulsion as a convenient cure for their shyness."⁴

However, this implicitly ironic treatment of love cannot be read simplistically at face value and requires a careful approach, and so also with regard to the general attitude toward the peasant population and what chroniclers and narrators commented about it.⁵

Rape was very often on authors' mind, and in this chapter I will examine one most unusual and egregious case that seems, at first sight, to be not much more than an example of satirical ridicule of the peasant world. In fact, we might even question whether there is sufficient ground to talk about rape, although a young woman loses her virginity against her will. Concretely, at closer examination, we will discover significant comments about social practices and conflicts within the rural setting and reflections of an urban poet about the perceived reality within a village context concerning women's victimization and men's predatory attitude.

The Constance public notary Heinrich Wittenwiler composed a most fascinating allegorical verse allegory about foolish peasants in his extensive poem entitled *Ring*, ca. 1400, which also allows us to investigate the issue of rape in greater detail, and especially in a satirical context. Not much biographical data is really known about the author, although we can reasonably assume that he can be identified with the Constance lawyer Wittenwiler. He owned a house in the city; he might well have been married there, though he also enjoyed the particular role of a cleric because of his high level of learning and work as an intellectual, and was exempt, as a cleric, from the urban jurisdiction.⁶ He seems to have studied law in Bologna and returned home after having earned his Master of Arts degree there. Since 1387 he worked for the bishopric administration, but two years later we find him as a representative of the nearby town of Radolfzell, and in 1395 as an "advocatus curie," that is, as a lawyer for the bishop, soon enough rising to the highest position in the bishopric administration.⁷

Apart from a number of historical documents containing his name,⁸ and reflecting upon his legal activities, we have only his allegorical narrative, *Der Ring*,

⁴ Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 1990, 150.

⁵ Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, 1988.

⁶ Lutz, *Spiritualis Fornicatio*, 1990, 92.

⁷ Lutz, *Spiritualis Fornicatio*, 1990, 92.

⁸ Lutz, *Spiritualis Fornicatio*, 1990, 59–97.

which might have been composed around 1400, or as late as after the Council of Constance, in 1418.⁹ Although the poet drew from a certain tradition of satirizing the peasant class, a staple trope in medieval and early-modern literature, Wittenwiler goes far beyond the usual comedy and satire. Ultimately, an entire village community perishes because of utter foolishness, and everyone is killed in the war against the neighboring village. We, as the audience, quasi survivors of the projected Armageddon, can only gasp for air in order to grasp what has happened there really, and we are strongly urged to reflect upon the devastating outcome as presented by the narrator. *Der Ring* easily reveals itself as an allegorical text, containing numerous teachings about a wide range of aspects in human life, although at the end it seems rather doubtful to what extent these are meant seriously, or whether the protagonists, who are supposed to learn their lessons, really listen attentively and are willing, or capable, to draw the necessary conclusions and to apply them to their own lives.

Ultimately, as I have argued elsewhere, the central victim here proves to be human communication, hence language and the subsequent actions that are supposed to follow from the learning process.¹⁰ We might even go one step further and reflect upon the fact that the narrative has survived only in one manuscript.¹¹ Could it be that the message that Wittenwiler tried to convey did not reach his audience; hence the obvious disregard of his literary composition by his contemporaries?

This has not meant, however, that literary scholarship might have equally neglected this work; on the contrary, it is regarded as one of the masterpieces of German literature of the early fifteenth century.¹² In fact, the range of issues contained in Wittenwiler's work that have attracted research interests, seems to be endless, whether they focus on the changing colors in a vertical line accompanying the text, one signaling truth, the other the lack of truth of the statements, the rank of the *Ring* in comparison with contemporary texts, the role of the medical doctor,

⁹ Albrecht Classen, "Heinrich Wittenwiler," online, *The Literary Encyclopedia*, at: <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=11850> (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011). Bärmann, "Helden," 2001, 59–105, argues for the late dating because of Wittenwiler's possible connection with Otto von Hochberg, Bishop of Constance, and the Humanist Felix Hemmerlin.

¹⁰ Albrecht Classen, *Verzweigung und Hoffnung: Die Suche nach der kommunikativen Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 1 (Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002), 401–35.

¹¹ Formerly Staatsarchiv Meiningen in Thuringia, Archivaliensammlung des Hennebergischen Altertumsforschenden Vereins, call number 502 (formerly 29), now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, Cgm 9300. The acquisition of the manuscript by the Bayrische Staatsbibliothek was regarded as a major coup and as a considerable enrichment of its collections; see Montag, *Heinrich Wittenwiler*, 2003.

¹² See, for instance, Horst Brunner's prologue to his translation into New High German, Heinrich Wittenwiler, *Der Ring*, 1991, 3.

the debates about marriage, the wedding and the carnevalesque celebrations, the war between the two villages, the assistance of allied troops, whether dwarfs and giants, or witches and knights from the past, the ethical principles, Wittenwiler's criticism of his society, and the question what genre this text represents.¹³

Currently the text is available in two editions accompanied by a modern German translation, then in an English and a Japanese translation.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this has not led to more extensive discussions about this text outside of medieval German Studies, although Wittenwiler's narrative reveals numerous important social-historical aspects, drawing from a wide range of literary, scholarly, theological, and philosophical sources and providing us with a wealth of material for mental-historical investigations.¹⁵

The son of a rich farmer, Bertschi Triefnas, wants to marry Metzli Rüerenzumpf, and everything hinges upon this plan. The text begins with a report about a most dubious tournament involving, on the one hand, the young male members of the village of Lappenhausen, and, on the other, the knight Neidhart. This noble character was probably highly familiar to German audiences since the first half of the thirteenth century when the courtly poet Neidhart had created his seemingly autobiographical, in reality fictional love songs. In his summer songs Neidhart of Reuenthal (Neidhart of the Dale of Sorrow) reaps the profit of his physical attraction and allures the female village population to his place. In the winter songs, on the other hand, he basically fails as his poverty and incompetence comes through. He simply loses out in the competition against the rich and powerful country lads and does not even have a warm abode to allure the women to him.¹⁶ In the Ring, as to be expected, Neidhart badly defeats them all and actually kills some of them, whereas the others receive deep wounds. But although he is considerably better qualified and trained than all of them, he also resorts to deceptive measures and thus can hurt them even further, which casts a rather ambiguous light on him as a representative of the knightly class who lowers

¹³ Riha, *Die Forschung*, 1990; *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft* 8 (1994/95). See also Schlaffke, *Heinrich Wittenwilers Ring*, 1969; Arpad Stephan Andreänsky, *Topos und Funktion*, 1977; Mueller, *Festival*, 1977; Cross, *Magister ludens*, 1984; Gruchot, *Heinrich Wittenwilers "Ring"*, 1988; see also Wiessner, *Der Wortschatz*, 1970; for a more recent overview, see Classen, "Heinrich Wittenwiler," 1997, 326–31; Laude, "Daz in swindle", 2002.

¹⁴ See Brunner's edition; and Heinrich Wittenwiler, "Der Ring", 1988; for other translations and older editions, see Riha, *Die Forschung*, 1990, 45–53.

¹⁵ There has been a significant growth of research on Wittenwiler's *Ring* in recent years; see, for instance, Schulz, *Eherechtsdiskurse*, 2005; Kalning, *Kriegslehren*, 2006; Hans-Jürgen Bachorski, *Irrsinn*, 2006. None of these, however, address the topic that concerns us here.

¹⁶ For Neidhart, see Jackson, "Neidhart," 1994, 88–91. Still seminal in her profoundly scholarly treatment of Middle High German love poetry, including Neidhart, proves to be Sayce, *The Medieval German Lyric*, 1982, 217–33.

himself to this primitive engagement with the peasants although they are no match for him and are terribly victimized in this uneven tournament.¹⁷

Next, Bertschi Triefnas—all peasant figures in this text have satirical names, often with a scatological or sexual meaning¹⁸—begins to woo the young peasant woman Mätzli Rüerenzumpf, which proves to be difficult and challenging for him. He experiences various mishaps and demonstrates a characteristic clumsiness in his behavior which the narrator obviously wanted to project as typical of the peasant class at large. Bertschi even tries to surprise her in the cow shed and to force her to sleep with him, but she does not understand who he is, does not know what he wants, and mistakes him for a thief. The resulting uproar and noise chase him away. Next he climbs onto her father's rooftop and falls into the house because of his weight. Her father begins to suspect what is going on and locks his daughter away in the attempt to protect her from further wooing. But there she discovers, literally, her sexuality and begins to masturbate, experiencing greatest pleasure. In the meantime, Bertschi, heavily drunk but still clear in his mind, asks the village scribe to compose a love letter on his behalf, which gives rise to the opportunity for the latter, Nabelreiber, to offer him a general lesson on love. Unfortunately, when he throws the letter, attached to a stone, onto the attic, he hits Mätzli at her head causing her to bleed. Nevertheless, this makes it possible for her to convince her father to let her free and visit the doctor Chrippenchra, who treats her injury, but also rapes her. Below I will examine this scene as closely as possible and investigate to what extent we can really speak of 'rape' in this context.

In reality she had asked to see the doctor so that he could read the letter to her and then write a response, which all happens, except that she loses her virginity in the course of her visit to his office and becomes pregnant. But the doctor advises her how to pretend still to be a virgin when she will sleep with her bridegroom in the wedding night, deceiving him by resorting to a clever theatrical act. An old go-between helps to carry secretly the love letter, a masterpiece of epistolary art,¹⁹ to Bertschi, who calls in his large family to counsel him regarding marriage. This develops into a comprehensive debate about the value and meaning of married life, which reflects the growing concern with this topic in the late Middle Ages.²⁰ Finally the relatives approve his plans and he is subjected to a rigid examination to find out whether he is ready for conjugal life in spiritual and material terms, which provides once again an opportunity for the narrator to insert extensive teachings about proper ethical and moral behavior, about how to keep the body

¹⁷ See the contributions to *Neidhartrezeption*, 2000. See also Simon, "Neidharte," 1972, 155–79; Traverse, "Neidhart," 2005, 405–17.

¹⁸ Boesch, "Die Namenwelt," 1965, 127–59.

¹⁹ For an extensive discussion of such a figure, see Mieszkowski, *Medieval Go-Betweens*, 2006; eadem, "Old Age," 2007, 299–319; Pratt, "De vetula," 2007, 321–42.

²⁰ Classen, *Der Liebes- und Ehediskurs*, 2005.

healthy, how to safeguard one's virtues, and how to maintain a household as a married man.

Everything seems to run its course as desired by everyone, and the positive conditions promise Bertschi and Mätzli to gain the long awaited marital happiness. The wedding guests arrive and hand over their gifts, but they all prove to be rather shabby and second-hand items, shedding significant light once again on the peasants as a collective group, seen from the perspective of the urban author with his dim view of the rural population. The wedding feast makes one wonder even further about the guests' lack of manners, self-control, education, and intellect. The subsequent dance turns into a rough and crude form of entertainment with many of the participants stumbling, falling over each other, and hurting their partners.

Tragically, at one point the peasant Eisengrein feels so infatuated with the maid Gredul that he wants to signal his feelings to her by scratching her palm, but he proves to be so clumsy and forceful that it begins to bleed. Her uncle Schinddennack observes this and immediately attacks the perpetrator verbally, voicing loud complaints that guests should be treated better. But Eisengrein is not impressed and counters with a strong threat that he would rape both his opponent's mother and the niece: "Ich siert dir noch die muoter dein / Mit sampt der niftel (hörstu das?) . . ." (6469–70). Not short of words, Schindennack, who had come from the village Nissingen, warns him: "' . . . Und sierst du mir die muoter mein, / Ich siert dich selb und alz dein geschlächt'" (6473–74; ' . . . And if you rape my mother, I'll rape you and so your whole family').²¹ With this aggressive exchange of words all hell breaks loose and the members of both villages turn into bitter enemies, recklessly and mercilessly fighting against each other. The guests from other villages, filled with *Schadenfreude*, wisely stay away and watch from the distance without intervening, happy that the fight between those from Lappenhausen and those from Nissingen luckily spares them. The fight quickly assumes monstrous dimensions with ghastly stabbing, wounding, and even killing.

Finally those from Nissingen have to retreat and flee home, which again proves to be most challenging, but they manage and can fend off their pursuers. But hardly have they reached their village, do they turn against their enemies and fight them off so energetically that the peasants from Lappenhausen have to flee in turn, and on the way home break down the bridge and run back to their village. There they turn against the young women from the other villages and collectively rape them:

Seu viengen pei den henden
Die mätznen ellenden

²¹ For a discussion of the verb 'sernten' (to rape, bother, hit, or to lure), see Wiessner, *Der Wortschatz*, 1970, 170.

Ze sertenn und ze schenden;
 Daz chond in niemant gwenden.
 Des warent doch von Seurrenstorff
 Und von Rützingen dem dorff
 Die diernen all gefüeret hin:
 Das was ier er und auch gewin. (6672–79)

[They grabbed the foreign girls
 at their hands
 and raped and dishonored them;
 which no one could prevent them from doing.
 Those girls from Seurrenstorff
 and those from the village of Rützingen
 had been led away in time:
 this was their honor and gain.]

Apparently, raping the enemies' women proves to be one of the most effective ways of shaming and ridiculing the other, a tragic experience in the modern world as well.²² Again, however, the collective perpetration against these women serves military, political purposes, and not necessarily sexual ones. Significantly, in this situation the group and gang rape takes place in full view of the public, and the latter completely approves of it because it helps them all to compensate for their military defeat against the guests and to vindicate their deep sense of shame and feeling of inferiority. The narrator, however, does not seem to be troubled by this outcome, apparently because it only confirms his overall attitude toward the peasant class where such beastly transgressions against the female sex seem to be the norm.

The last section of Wittenwiler's *Ring* concerns the war preparations on both sides, with extensive debates about the proper approach in such matters.²³ Those in Lappenhausen appeal to many cities all over Europe to come to their assistance, but these, after lengthy deliberation, finally refuse to let themselves be dragged into this idiotic and deadly fight. By contrast, fools, witches, giants, and knights—a deliberately satirical compilation of mostly mythical figures with a deft swipe by Wittenwiler at the tradition of medieval literature—join the peasants against those from Nissingen. Even the Swiss troops come to their assistance, another sarcastic comment by the narrator, a citizen of Constance, very close to the border to the Swiss region. All this support, however, does not help against the considerably smarter Nissingen peasants who deliberately resort to deception and find their

²² This topic is heavily discussed also in modern scholarship; see, for instance, Weaver, *Ideologies of Forgetting*, 2010; Jacobs, *Freiwild*, 2008; Gottschall, *The Rape of Troy*, 2008; Wagner, "The Systematic Use of Rape," 2006, 193–43. The list of relevant studies is legion, reflecting the enormous dimension of this crime against women in the wake or as part of war.

²³ Kalning, *Kriegslehren*, 2006.

best assistance in a woman among those of Lappenhäusen willing to betray them. At the end, the Nissingen peasants win the war and kill the entire population, including women and children. Only Bertschi Triefnas survives because he had hid in the attic of a large shed and pretended at the end, when he was already besieged and near starvation, to have turned lunatic, which frightens his enemies, who then abandon him. Bertschi discovers the bodies of all the slain family members, neighbors, friends, and even of his own wife, and in his utter despair, without having learned anything from the tragic experiences, withdraws into the Black Forest without ever returning to the world. He dedicates his life to God and dies a pious death.

It cannot be the point here to examine the *Ring* in its entirety once again, especially since we are so fortunate to have available numerous editions, each accompanied by an extensive commentary, and a whole sleuth of insightful and far-reaching interpretations in the form of articles and monographs. Instead, let us focus on the mostly ignored rape scene in the doctor's office and analyze why it is possible for Chrippenchra to ravish the young woman, why she allows him to do it, and how the narrator evaluates both their behavior. In other words, what can we learn about the general attitude toward rape in late-medieval German literature when we investigate this most unusual allegorical verse narrative?

In the first place, as Wittenwiler signals, rape happened easily and was a dangerous criminal act with many social implications. But why does it happen particularly here? What are the circumstances that facilitate the medical doctor's abuse of Mätzli for his own sexual pleasure? *Der Ring* takes place almost entirely in the world of peasants, which is clearly viewed through the lens of satire and contempt.²⁴ Of course, not everyone in the Middle Ages regarded peasants with disdain, and the rural existence was not necessarily worse than life in the city, or at court, in a castle, etc. In fact, some poets, and certainly contemporary artists projected ideal images of freedom, carefree existence, and wealth among peasants, perhaps either out of a sense of jealousy, or for theological reasons to criticize the arrogance, materialism, and worldliness of the urban world.²⁵ Nevertheless, peasants were regularly the butt of jokes and subject to endless ridicule, as the countless Shrovetide plays, jest narratives, and other text genres indicate where

²⁴ Martini, *Das Bauertum*, 1944; Heumann and Reinhardt, *Bürger und Bauern*, 1967; Rösener, *Peasants*, 1992; Camporesi, *Bauern*, 1994.

²⁵ One case would be the South-Tyrolean poet Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376/77–1445) who harbored rather mixed views of peasants, sometimes complaining bitterly about them, and sometimes identifying deeply with the peasant existence that would provide him sexual freedom and a worry-free existence; see Classen, "Der Bauer," 1988, 150–67.

representatives of the rural population figure prominently and are characterized as fools and ignoramuses.²⁶

Mätzli is furious at herself for having failed utterly in school to learn how to read and write, or rather, for having forgotten it all (1955–57). Apparently she had had the opportunity to go to school, but her own laziness or stupidity has made it impossible for her to learn or to retain anything. She is at least not so ignorant and foolish not to think about an opportunity to get out of her prison in the attic and to be sent to the medical doctor because of the wound at her head. Indeed, this strategy works, so she can trick her father who releases her and allows her to see the doctor.

When she gets to Chrippenchra's office, the crowd of people intimidates her, and the doctor immediately recognizes what her true intention seems to be, so he leads her to a separate room where he can be alone with her: "Chrippenchra der ward des innen, / Was die junchfraw wolt beginnen" (2015–16; Chrippenchra understood what the virgin wanted). Although he uses pseudo-scientific language, emphasizing that he would find the right root as medicine for her, there is no doubt that he has sex in mind, particularly because of his phallic language: "'... Da wirt man ier der wurtzen geben, / Wil mans behalten pei dem leben'" (2026–27; there she will get a root without which her life cannot be rescued).²⁷ Mätzli has only intended to find help to read the letter and then to respond with a letter by herself, but she has put herself into a dangerous situation now, being alone in a room with the lustful doctor not understanding any of his sexual innuendos and allusions at first. Moreover, this doctor quickly reveals his lack of professionalism and his association with quackery. In fact, he cooperates, in secret, with an old go-between, as we learn later, and he displays no real concerns for the well-being of his patients.²⁸

Granted, Chrippenchra takes care of all her needs, reads the letter out loud, then promises to write the response for her, and subsequently treats her head wound. The problem for her develops, however, when she dictates to the doctor what she wants him to write in the letter because she reveals thereby her great sexual needs and her readiness to spend the night with Bertschi, and this in the doctor's house of all places: "Chüm zuo mir pei diser nacht / Ins artzetz haus und gib mir chraft!" (2091–92; Come to me this night here in the doctor's house and give me strength!). Once he has heard these words, Chrippenchra realizes that Mätzli would be an

²⁶ For more differentiating views, see the contributions to *Voices from the Bench*, 2006; Jørgensen, *Bauer*, 1988.

²⁷ For the sexual meaning of the metaphor 'root,' see Zeyen, *...daz tet der liebe dorn*, 1996, 54. Further bibliographical references there.

²⁸ Schlaffke, *Heinrich Wittenweilers Ring*, 1969, 45–46. In note 18 he provides references to older studies on quack doctors in the Middle Ages. For a broad overview, see Loudon, *Western Medicine*, 1997.

easy prey for him since he associates her with a whore who would be willing without any coaxing to grant him his sexual wishes as well: “‘Trun, du macht ein hüerrel sein, / Mich triegin dann die sinne mein!’” (2099–2100; “Indeed, you might be a prostitute, unless my senses deceive me!”).²⁹ He finds encouragement to pursue his sexual goals by reflecting upon traditional misogynous concepts: “‘Den frawen ist der ars ze prait, / Daz hertz ze smal.’ Daz ist gesait / So vil, und ich euchs btüten wil” (2103–05; ‘Women’s ass is too broad, the heart too small.’ This has been said many times, and let me interpret it for you).

But Chrippenchra reveals his own crudeness and lack of education because he simply farts (2116) when he has to laugh about his (faulty) realization that all women lack honor and are easily swayed to have sex with a man. When he then turns to Mätzli, he plays on the pornographic pun with her last name, “Rüerenzumph,” which proves to be most revealing as well: ‘Touch the Penis,’ Considering this only thinly veiled meaning, he emphasizes that her name would fit very well to his “stumph” (2118; penis), and so encourages her to sleep with him.³⁰ He first offers her, in return for her favor, his help to mend the tense relationship with her father Fritz who has often made her life difficult. Next, however, he threatens her to expose her and to shame her publicly by revealing the entire love story to her father: “‘. . . Und tuost du nicht, ich mach dir schand’” (2125; ‘. . . and if you do not do it, I bring shame upon you’). Chrippenchra holds all the evidence in his hands that would expose Mätzli’s secret love affair, that is, Bertschi’s letter and the response that he has written himself on Mätzli’s behalf (2126–28), so he is in a good position to blackmail her, and he utilizes this opportunity shamelessly.³¹

Although the narrator emphasizes that she does not really understand the meaning of his words (“Mätzli wist nit, was er sait” (2129), she bitterly complains about his evil plan and insists that she has no idea about the meaning of his “stumph”: “‘. . . Des stumpfen bkenn ich auch ein schaiss’” (2136; I know shit about this stub).³² As it occurs many times throughout the text, the narrator adds

²⁹ For a recent discussion of prostitutes and brothels in the late Middle Ages, see Blaschitz, “Das Freudenhaus,” 2008, 715–50.

³⁰ Helfenbein, “Zur Auffassung,” 1976, chapter 6.

³¹ A similar case can be found in Heinrich der Glîchezâre’s *Reinhart Fuchs* from ca. 1170 or somewhat later where the fox rapes the wolf’s wife, Hersant, while she is stuck in the narrow burrow to his own home into which she had run in hot pursuit of her enemy, the very person/animal who is then raping her. See Widmaier, *Das Recht*, 1993, 103–11.

³² Brunner, in his translation, renders the term “stumphen” as “Hans,” playing on the use of this common name for the penis. He translates this passage as: “von dem Hans begreif ich einen Scheißdreck” (I do not understand shit about this John). Sowinski, on the other hand, changes the meaning considerably, offering a different reading altogether: “um euern Schwanz kümmer ich mich nicht einen Scheiß” (I give a shit for your pole), which would mean that she has fully grasped what the doctor wants, but rejects his invitation to intercourse outright. Since Mätzli

a satirical comment, seemingly praising Mätzli for her courtly response: "Daz was vil züchtichleichen gret" (2137; She expressed herself most courteously). But in reality, he harbors no respect for his female protagonist and does not really care that the doctor next proceeds to seduce, or rather, to rape her. He resorts to titillating language of a most pornographic nature, obviously exposing himself, encouraging her to remain calm and to allow the root (his penis) to penetrate her: "' . . Und lass dich nicht verdriessen: / Der wurtzen muost du niessen: / Der wurtzen muost du niessen, / Wilt du so nicht verderben / In deinen sünden sterben'" (2145–448; " . . Do not mind it, you must take [enjoy] the root: you must accept the root, if you do not want to perish with your sins"). Grotesquely, but not surprisingly, Chrippenchra even resorts to clerical language, combining the medical with the theological, threatening her that she would have to die and suffer eternal condemnation in Hell if she were not to allow him to sleep with her.

The situation proves to be most curious for Mätzli, since we must assume that she is raped, and yet the narrator casts her, in his typically sarcastic contempt of the peasant class, as a rather willing victim. On the one hand she clearly suffers from duress, being forced by Chrippenchra into a sexual relationship with him. He extorts her willingness by threatening to reveal her real erotic interests in Bertschi to her father, as clearly documented by the love letters. On the other hand, he obviously appeals to her base instincts, particularly considering that her sexuality has been awakened only recently when Bertschi began to woo her, which led to her masturbation while she was alone in the attic. Since she proves to be sexually dissatisfied and longs for intercourse, the doctor does not need much coaxing to realize his base desires with this young woman who hardly cares about public honor and any *mores*—all certainly projected from a male perspective only.

Ironically, considering that he had also threatened her that she might die without receiving absolution of her sins (2147–48), she accepts him as an authority figure and so feels entirely free to submit to his wishes: "'Nu dar, mein lieber herr, daz sei!'" (2149; "Oh well, my dear lord, so be it!"). Insofar as she grants the doctor also the rank as a spiritual leader, she follows the same pattern of behavior displayed by the male members of the village in their initial jousting with the knight Neidhart. When the latter had noticed that the peasants seemed fearful of continuing with the fight against him, he pretended as if he were fleeing from them, which encouraged them again to chase after him. But in their haste and ignorance, two of them fall to the ground and die, which frightens the rest so much that they abandon all further struggle and, in a curious perversion of their

emphasizes beforehand, "Ewers willens ich enwaiss" (2135; I do not know what you want), Brunner's version seems closer to the original, which is very important for our interpretation, considering the two options, whether Mätzli is an innocent, ignorant virgin, or a young woman who fully understands the meaning of sex but does not care for the doctor.

perception, treat Neidhart as a member of the Church and beg him to take their confessions: “... Won wier nu, trun, enphinden wol, / Ir seit des heiligen gaistes vol” (666–67; “Truly, we realize now that you are filled with the Holy Spirit”).³³

Whether the peasants are involved in a military conflict, or are exposed to a rape attempt, they do not understand how to discriminate between true and false authority figures and do not comprehend any of the basic teachings of the Church, as Wittenwiler implies, both here and throughout his text, obviously drawing from Biblical exegesis in the tradition of the Book of Job, known to medieval audiences mostly through Gregory’s *Moralia in Iob*, identifying all the inhabitants of the village of Lappenhausen, in an allegorical sense, with all people here on earth who do not comprehend the greatness of God and the need to reach for a spiritual reading of this world.³⁴

Believing that she can trust the doctor in every respect, and would not have to worry about any moral issues, she simply consents, submits, and follows his orders, granting him all the pleasures that he is looking for: “Nu dar, mein lieber herr, daz sei!” / Sprach die junchfraw sorgen frei” (2149–50; “Oh well, my dear lord, so be it,” said the virgin free of all cares). First she offers him fellatio: “Da mit ward sei der wurtzen essen” (2151; then she ate the root), even though this could also be understood metaphorically, suggesting simply sexual intercourse with him.³⁵ Whatever she might have experienced, it leaves her dazed and hungry for more, whereas the doctor would prefer to leave it at one encounter, being exhausted already. She insists, however, that now that he has done it to her once, he must repeat it another time: “Artzet mich en wenig me” (2157; treat me medically a little more), which reflects typical medieval assumptions about women’s inexhaustible sexual desire. Although for her the experience now begins to feel pleasurable, she still characterizes the first sexual intercourse as almost painful and violent: “... Ich derlaid es bas dan e!” (2158; “... I will handle this suffering better than before”).

In fact, she now begins to turn the tables and forces him to provide her with more sex than he would like, holding him at his testicles (2160), telling him that he would not be allowed to renounce it. Now she has tasted the metaphorical root and demands to get more of it (2162), to which he finally succumbs, although at the end he fails: “Er mocht es laider nicht gefüegen, / Daz sei sich wölt des stumphes gnüegen” (2169–70; He could not achieve the goal to give her enough

³³ See the commentary by Sowinski, 428, who points out that the sudden death of the two fellows invokes the *memento-mori* motif and hence also the travesty of the ritual of confession to a priest, as practiced already in the Neidhart tradition. See also Cross, *Magister ludens*, 1984, 27–30.

³⁴ Lutz, *Spiritualis fornicatio*, 1990, 306–11.

³⁵ For concrete evidence that contemporary poets talked about fellatio, see Lazda-Cavers, “Oral Sex,” 2008, 597; Karras, *Sexuality*, 2005, 134. For another concrete example of fellatio, even though from Valentin Schumann’s *Nachtbüchlein* from 1599, see also Walter, *Unkeuschheit*, 1998, 258.

satisfaction with his penis). In fact, when she demands a third sexual intercourse, he curses her and refuses to comply with her request: "' . . . Benüegt dich nicht, so ge zum se: / Ich mag nicht nollen imer me!'" (2179–80; If you do not have enough, then go down to the lake, I can no longer fuck you!").³⁶

Whereas initially the doctor had raped her, now he has to realize that he had really initiated her into the world of sexuality, which she finds most exciting and pleasurable, so she demands more than he is capable of providing, for which there are many parallels motifs in late-medieval literature.³⁷

Although at the end this young woman has assumed control over the sexual situation with the medical doctor, and although he has to withdraw despite all her pleas to stay and to continue with their sexual intercourse, the end result proves that he had raped her after all, irrespective of her positive response to his seduction, at least after the first time. Mätzli becomes pregnant and realizes quickly enough the enormous embarrassment and shame that she will have to face if this secret becomes known in her community. The only one to realize what has happened, however, is the doctor, the father of her child, who is also afraid that the truth might come out to his great detriment (2263–64).

Whereas before his intent had only been to gain sexual pleasures from her, now he is greatly worried about the social consequences for both of them. But he quickly finds a solution and teaches her, first, what herbs to use in order to reduce her bodily swelling, particularly at her genitals. Then he instructs her how to prepare herself for the wedding night, using a fish bladder and filling it with pigeon blood. Once Bertschi would try to sleep with her, she ought to fight him off

³⁶ Again, this complies with a very common narrative pattern throughout the Middle Ages and far beyond, concerning women's alleged insatiability in sexual matters, leading to men's fear of women and worries about their own sexual potency. One of the best examples might be the in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* where in the twenty-eighth novella a married prince tries to sleep with his wife's chambermaid. But when he has finally arranged a secret meeting with her, and then is supposed to perform with her, he cannot do it. Three times he coaxes her out of his wife's bedroom, but each time he fails to get an erection. The two 'lovers' had come up with the plan to lock out the lady's favorite greyhound. To give the maid the agreed upon signal, the prince pulls the dog's ears, eliciting loud yelping. The lady sends her maid to look for the dog and let him in, which is, of course, not happening. But when the maid returns a third time, again without the dog, and also deeply frustrated sexually, she explains to her lady that the dog has crept under a bench, with the snout flat on the ground. Although she made every effort to pull him up, it did not work since the dog did not want to raise its head. All this proves to be highly sexualized metaphors for the lover's impotence. Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie*, 1899 [?], here cited from the online version at: www.gutenberg.org/files/18575-8/txt. I discuss this and many other narratives in these *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* in my book *Sex im Mittelalter* (forthcoming).

³⁷ See the commentary by Sowinski, 435; see also Puchta-Mähl, "Wanes ze ring", 1986, 221. The motif can also be discovered numerous times in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century *mæren*, i.e., mostly erotic verse narratives, such as in the anonymous *Das Häslein* (ca. 1300), the Old French *La Gruue*, or *Le Héron*, and the Middle High German *Der Sperber*; see *Erotic Tales*, 2009, 35; Klaus Grubmüller, *Novellistik im deutschen Mittelalter*, 1996, 590–616.

as hard as she can, she should scream loudly, and once he finally would have reached his goal and penetrated her, she should squeeze on the fish bladder and make the blood come out pretending as if he had ruptured her hymen.

But all these plans would come to fruition only if the wedding plans are promoted, so Chrippenchra composes a most elegant and rhetorically embellished letter to Bertschi, which indeed achieves the desired goal. The rest is history and does not need to be examined here any further. Although everyone demonstrates good will and the young couple expresses ardent desire to marry each other, the people's foolishness, if not plain stupidity, ultimately brings about the collapse of the wedding festivities, which then erupts into violence, which finally turns into a military conflict with catastrophic consequences for those of Lappenhausen.³⁸

But let us return to the initial question that determines the entire scene with the medical doctor. Did he rape her? Or did she volunteer and agree to have sexual intercourse with her? The simple answer is 'no' because Chrippenchra grossly abuses the young women in his role as an authority figure and as the only one who can help her to read the love letter and to compose an answer. Once he has completed those tasks, he has all the evidence in his hands to blackmail her sexually, so she has to submit to his demands. It does not matter for our investigation that she quickly begins to enjoy the sexual experience and then even demands of him to sleep with her several times more.³⁹

Would we have to blame Mätzli for having been blind to the dangerous situation in the doctor's private room? Could she have foreseen his evil intentions? There is no specific indication that any such assumptions would carry weight in this debate. She did not turn to the doctor for sexual pleasure. Her mind was clearly set on Bertschi, and she was desperate in finding a person who could read the love letter to her and then compose an answer. Certainly, she does not really fight against Chrippenchra and quickly submits to his demands, especially because he assumes the posture of a priest who threatens her with eternal condemnation if she does not comply with his demands. Mätzli does not understand much about sexuality, though she has begun to explore her own body once her father had locked her up in the attic. The doctor's rhetorical strategy overwhelms her completely, and in her naiveté she happily goes along with him because of his authorial stance and then, quite quickly, because she has enjoyed the first sexual

³⁸ Note the significant symbolic parallel between Mätzli being locked away in the attic when her father notices how foolishly Bertschi has begun to woo her, and Bertschi withdrawing into the attic of the barn to hide from the enemies. Only when these foolish people are far removed from society, do they not experience severe threats to their health and their life.

³⁹ There is much ground that would allow us to endeavor a comparative analysis between Wittenwiler's *Ring* and the anonymous *Mauritius von Craûn*, despite the very different setting and social background. The term 'date rape' easily comes to mind again.

experience so much that she demands several repeats, which exhausts him completely.

The narrative does not, however, simply divide condemnation and exculpation in this rape scene. We might even wonder why her parents allow her to see the doctor all by herself. Although there are many other people in the doctor's office, he chases them all away and withdraws with Mätzli into a private chamber. No one exerts any control, and neither Mätzli's parents nor her neighbors and friends are there to help and assist her. Her father has a clear sense that his daughter is experiencing a sudden infusion of sexual desires as part of her growing out of puberty, and takes at least a somewhat reasonable approach to lock Mätzli away. But she knows how to outsmart him and succeeds in securing her release, which immediately paves the way to the doctor who then rapes her.

Mätzli is also to be blamed because she does not understand the danger of revealing all her private feelings and secret plans to the doctor, who quickly recognizes how easy it would be for him to seduce this young woman whom he characterizes right away as a prostitute in her basic character, lacking in morality and any ethical principles. But the doctor really abuses his authority function and draws from general male attitudes toward women whom he regards in general and without any distinctions as sexual prey for male desires. The metaphor for his thinking deserves particular attention because it is based on the game of chess: "Frawen unkeusch ist ein vinden, / Den chainroch mag überwinden. / Waz sag ich euch? Es ist nicht new, / Wie smal sei aller weiben trew" (2107–10; women's lack of chastity is a pawn in the game of chess which no bishop can overcome. What am I telling you? There is nothing new about it that all women's loyalty is small).⁴⁰ There is no room in Chrippenchra's thinking about what women really want, and whether there might be any problem with his violent approach in forcing Mätzli to sleep with him if she wants to avoid that her budding love affair with Bertschi be revealed by the doctor to her father. Once he has reached this conclusion, he laughs so hard that he farts (2116), a signal of his utter carelessness concerning proper behavior and cultured manners.⁴¹ Consequently he resorts to egregiously pornographic language and then to lewd gestures, exposing his own body, hence forcing Mätzli into a situation in which she has no way out and must go along with his plan to have sexual intercourse.

⁴⁰ Jönsson, "Von tugendhaften Königinnen," 2005, 267: "Auch wenn anhand der Exempel keine explizite Diffamierung der Frauenfiguren stattfindet, zeigt sich besonders in den Exempeln zur Sexualmoral die andronormative Textperspektive und eine latend vorhandene, implizite Misogynie" (Even if the exempla do not demonstrate an explicit defamation of female figures, the exempla concerning sexual morality reveal an andro-normative perspective in the texts and an implicit, latently present misogyny).

⁴¹ For the epistemological meaning of farting in the Middle Ages, see Allen, *On Farting*, (2007).

This does not mean that Wittenwiler would harbor any particular sympathy for Mätzli, particularly since she subsequently wants to have more sex from the doctor than he can deliver. In fact, the narrator strongly reconfirms traditionally misogynous prejudices about women and presents this young woman as a typically nymphomaniac monster whom no man would be able to satisfy, such as the wild women in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* from ca 1340. But the negative characterization of both Chrippenchra and Mätzli conforms to Wittenwiler's overarching intent to ridicule the peasant world altogether, whether he targeted that social class in particular or whether, which seems much more likely, he perceived the peasants as representatives of all people characterized by common foolishness.⁴² As to the compromising situation in the doctor's room, however, there is no doubt that the physician rapes and in the process impregnates the peasant girl.

Despite all his satire and ridicule of the peasants, the specific circumstances here in the *Ring* confirm that Wittenwiler clearly conceived this case as an example of rape. He does not approve of it, but he does not voice harsh criticism against the doctor either because there is no one in the entire rural community that would deserve any respect from him anyway. In fact, despite his status as a learned person, Chrippenchra does not emerge as a particularly impressive figure, although he knows surprisingly well how to compose a literary love letter for Mätzli. Nevertheless, from our perspective, there is no doubt that rape occurs, and that it is viewed as such, that is, as a violent, criminal act perpetrated by the doctor as an authority figure who badly abuses his power position to force the ignorant woman into sexual submission. After all, Lappenhausen is explicitly identified as the world suffering from topsy-turveydom, so raping a young woman who is looking for advice and help from the medical doctor to promote her love affair with a young peasant, Bertschi, whom she wants to marry, only confirms the tragic travesty that has affected everyone. Rape, in other words, emerges as a sad but realistic expression of the destiny suffered by all people, even if Mätzli soon enough begins to enjoy the sexual intercourse and demands more. She does not

⁴² Mueller, *Festival and Fiction*, 1977, 95: "The figure of the peasant-fool, correspondingly, is inadequately identified with the antitype of the world-wise burgher. This equation would seem to reflect our modern penchant for viewing symbol, allegory, or typology as detours to direct mimesis of thoughts or emotions, and it does an injustice to medieval art by superimposing an alien system of intellection and valuation . . . The sinner-fool is erring man, the creature out of step with God's creation, the timeless Everyman who has substituted worldly goals for beatitude. He becomes associated with the peasant, partly because the historical peasant is the most representative and best-known figure of this age, the *personnage régissant*, and partly because Christianity is uncommonly fond of the positive imagery that emanates from the countryman's life-promoting and creative activity. The antitype of the peasant-fool, therefore, is not the real peasant, but rather the ideal or exemplary plowman, Adam before the fall, the Christ-man as he should be" (95–96).

understand what has happened to her and thus turns into an ignorant victim of worldly materialism and lack of morality and ethics.⁴³

In fact, we might read her rape as a metaphor of human society being raped by the devil in the Christian sense of the word. But, as Rolf R. Mueller observes, "[t]he author's position *vis-à-vis* his creation is consequently characterized by a double perspective or incongruity, which remains invariably comic. The annihilation of the contemptible sinner-fool is a morally binding higher directive, and Wittenwiler complies only after exploiting the repertory before him for an astounding variety of humorous effects."⁴⁴ Indeed, the doctor scene proves to be comical, after all, although our laughter might get choked by the realization what has really happened to the young woman. Since the author created a huge allegorical poem, following Lutz's convincing reading,⁴⁵ the rape also has to be read in that light. Nevertheless, even the best allegory must draw from reality in order to illustrate the didactic messages. The almost immediate result of Chrippenchrä's raping of Mätzli, her pregnancy, confirms the degree to which violence determines this relationship. Wittenwiler drew from his general understanding of the crime of rape and utilized it for his poetic reflections upon the foolishness and gullibility of people at large.

⁴³ Mueller, *Festival and Fiction*, 1977, 96.

⁴⁴ Mueller, *Festival and Fiction*, 1977, 98.

⁴⁵ Lutz, *Spiritualis fornicatio*, 1990, 221–25.

Chapter 8

Apollonius of Tyre, Mai und Beafloer, and Other Late-Medieval Narratives. The Suffering of Young Women Within Their Families

One of the most popular late medieval narratives, *Apollonius of Tyre*, dealt with a wide variety of sexual crimes, and one of them was rape. It seems strange, yet it proves to be the case throughout times, the more violent and criminal literary accounts have been, the more they have enjoyed popularity—a situation that probably applies even to our own world.¹ This phenomenon also applied to *Apollonius of Tyre* where the young princess mentioned at the beginning is raped by no one else but by her own father (incest). It seems to be an almost classical condition that a widower, feeling forlorn and desperate, decides to focus on his own daughter and to prevent any other man from winning her hand. Marie de France (*Les deus amanz*) was only one of many medieval poets to present such a condition. The most successful text treating widowhood and the presence of a surviving daughter who then faces the danger of incestuous rape by her father, however, was *Apollonius of Tyre*, or *Historia Apollonii*, originally composed in Latin sometime in the fifth or sixth century, if not much earlier in Greek in the late second or third century in Syria. Throughout the entire Middle Ages and far into the sixteenth century, this narrative exerted extensive appeal, as richly documented by a vast number of manuscripts containing the text in Latin and many different vernaculars.² Poets throughout the centuries adapted the narrative for their own purposes, and as my own students today have confirmed consistently, the charm of this account has lost nothing of its power.³

Nevertheless, it is not a light and purely entertaining reading; instead the narrative is riddled with references to crimes, attempted murders, kidnapping, shipwrecking, famine, death, the dispersion of a family, and the attempted

¹ For the latest research on the history of reception of this text, see Richter, *Transmissionsgeschichten*, 2009.

² See the contributions to *Vettori e percorsi*, 2002.

³ Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre*, 1991.

prostitution of the female protagonist, Tarsia. Pirates roam the sea, innocent young women are prostituted, and a pimp at the end is burnt alive as punishment for his morally sordid business. But despite all these strikes of destiny and horrifying events, the outcome proves to be happy, and all sinister figures either die (through direct punishment coming from God, or through executions) or are overcome and eliminated by the central protagonist, Apollonius. There are many possible approaches for a critical reading of this enormously attractive text, but one of the most intriguing ones might well be the epistemological challenges (riddles) that ultimately help the suffering victims, especially father and daughter, to overcome the tragic constellations in their lives and recoup their happiness, basically brought about by their high degree of intelligence, acumen, wit, eloquence, morality, and ethics.⁴

The very contrast to Apollonius, King Antiochus, widower and father of a nubile daughter, passionately falls in love with her and cannot stand the idea that many wooers try to win her hand and marry her. As is common in such a situation, the king has lost his wife and recognizes in his daughter a suitable compensation, as perverse, unnatural, and sick this might be. As the narrator emphasizes: "He struggled with madness, he fought against passion, but he was defeated by love; he lost his sense of moral responsibility, forgot that he was a father, and took on the role of husband" (113). Being so powerful as father and king, and since no one is suspecting anything, he can easily enter his daughter's private chamber, order all her servants to leave the room, and, once the door has been shut, violently take the young woman's virginity: "Spurred on by the frenzy of his lust, he took his daughter's virginity by force, in spite of her lengthy resistance. When the wicked deed was done he left the bedroom" (113). The narrative does not go into any details, especially regarding the victim's feelings and certain trauma, except to emphasize that she tried to fight him off. To be sure, she is deeply shocked and psychologically damaged once her father has departed again: "But the girl stood astonished at the immorality of her wicked father" (113), which underscores the horror that she had to go through and the compassion which the narrator wants to evoke among his audience.⁵

⁴ Classen, "Reading and Deciphering," 2008, 161–88. For a good bibliography or primary and secondary literature, see Birkhan, *Leben und Abenteuer*, 2001, 441–48; see also Kortekaas, *Commentary*, 2007.

⁵ It was not uncommon in the Middle Ages, and still seems to be the case today, that under-aged crime victims are not allowed to speak up; hence the sources do not tell us much about their true inner feelings and psychological reactions to the sexual suffering they had to go through; see Goldberg, *Communal Discord*, 2008. In the case that he investigates, numerous testimonies came forward and left a deposition, but the young girl, Alice, who was the victim, never had a chance to discuss her position.

Blood is dripping on the floor when her nurse enters the room and finds her disheveled and deeply distraught. But as a remarkable indication of the true nature and purpose of this romance, exploring the meaning of language and words, how to decipher messages, and to solve riddles in the philosophical sense, the rape victim tells her nurse most ominously: “‘Dear nurse, just now in this bedroom, two noble reputations have perished’,” and “‘You see a girl who has been brutally and wickedly raped before her lawful wedding day’” (113). Upon the nurse’s encouragement to find refuge with her father and to ask him to revenge this shameful crime against her virginity, she continues: “‘And where is my father? . . . if you understand what has happened: for me the name of father has ceased to exist. So rather than reveal my parent’s crime, I prefer the solution of death’” (113–15).

Although the princess uses enigmatic language, the hidden meaning is just too clear and intended to underscore the brutality and viciousness of the crime. The situation for the young woman is, however, even worse because the rapist was her own father, and she feels so deeply ashamed of him and herself that she prefers death over having this disgrace get to be known among the people (115). To add insult to injury, however, the nurse does nothing to help the victim; instead she convinces her not to commit suicide in order to preserve the family’s honor and the king’s public esteem. Yet, in order to keep the father’s crime a secret, the young woman must consent to being his mistress from then on, basically turning into his sex slave.

The difference between private and public soon enough falls away, as the king has to pretend to be a devoted father: “but inside his own walls he delighted in being his daughter’s husband” (115). In order to hide his evil behavior and to continue the deceptive role he likes to play, he “posed riddles to get rid of her suitors” (115). For a while this plan works out, indeed, but as soon as Apollonius appears, the strategy fails because the young opponent successfully thwarts the rapist’s efforts to cover up his crime, so King Antiochus must resort to an assassination plan. This, however, fails as well, and thus the actual plot begins that will take the protagonist throughout the entire eastern Mediterranean, marrying another princess, losing his wife to assumed death because of the afterbirth during the delivery of their daughter, being forced to set out the alleged corpse to the waves, later handing over his baby to foster-parents, and disappearing himself for many years.

Tarsia, as she is called after the city where she lives with her foster-parents, grows up to a beautiful young woman, arousing her foster-mother’s jealousy, who orders one of her servants to murder her, but pirates kidnap the princess in the last minute and sell her into slavery. A pimp purchases the young woman, offering more money than the lord of the city, and tries to gain profit from her by prostituting Tarsia in his brothel. However, this plan also comes to naught because

she can appeal to all her customers in such a pitiful manner that they give her more money out of sympathy than if they had forced her to sleep with them in return for payment. Ultimately, Tarsia is called to comfort a grieving man in the bottom of his ship, who turns out to be her father. And soon enough, on their way home, they discover the allegedly dead mother, which then quickly leads to the happy end, with Tarsia marrying the prince of the city where she had suffered as a slave, Athenagoras.

In the meantime, the incestuous father was punished by God, having been struck by a thunderbolt "as he was lying in bed with his own daughter" (137). We do not know what happened with her, the innocent victim, who had, however, ultimately consigned to her father's evil conceit. For the narrative, altogether, rape is replaced by marriage based on love, and the evil perpetrator is removed from the face of the earth.⁶

Before I turn to the actual subject matter of this chapter, Heinrich von Neustadt's version of the ancient narrative, his *Apollonius von Tyrland*, which will allow us to pursue the topic of rape in the history of medieval German literature, I would like to consider an Anglo-Norman narrative determined by a fairly similar conflict, which will give us a sense of the wider medieval framework of the narrative motif. In Marie de France's *lai* "Les deus amanz," composed sometime around 1170–1180,⁷ a widowed king finds his own daughter exceedingly attractive and regards her as a "comfort to him ever since he had lost the queen."⁸ But in contrast to *Apollonius*, his subjects have noticed how much his behavior works against the need of the entire country: "Many people reproached him for this, and even his own people blamed him" (82). Knowing too well that he cannot hide his true emotional bonds with his own daughter, he naively believes that he could set up preconditions so difficult to meet that no wooer would have ever any chance: "When he heard that people were talking thus, he was very sad and disturbed, and began to consider how he could prevent anyone seeking his daughter's hand" (82). Soon enough he imposes a requirement that no normal person can fulfill, that is, carrying his daughter all the way up to the top of a mountain without resting. Some succeed to reach the half-way point, but no one can muster so much strength to climb up all the way. Consequently, the poor princess "remained unmarried for a long time, as no one wanted to seek her hand" (82). Finally, a young man

⁶ Archibald, "Incest," 1989, 1–15; eadem, "'The Appalling Dangers,'" 1996, 157–71.

⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of all of Marie's works, see Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France*, 2003, 89–91. Many of his readings, however, seem rather speculative; see my review in *Mediaevistik* 17 (2004): 362–66. For a detailed introduction to Marie, see Classen, "Marie de France," 2003; van Court, "Marie de France," 2006, 439–40.

⁸ The *Lais* of Marie de France, 1986, 82. Since I do not pursue a narrow philological analysis here, this excellent English translation will be good enough for my purposes.

appears who harbors so much love for her, and who appeals so strongly to her that they both collaborate to overcome the hindrance set up by the king.

Significantly, she demonstrates both a strong sense of love for her father and obviously also for the country under his rule because she refuses to run away with her lover and to elope: "Truly, I love him so much and hold him so dear that I would not want to wish to grieve him" (83). Instead, she remembers an aunt who works in Salerno as a medical doctor who could concoct a magical potion for the young man that would give him enough strength to carry his beloved up the mountain.

All this actually works out well, and the lover is finally ready to test his strength, with the princess having fasted for days, not wearing much to make the load lighter for him. Unfortunately, half way up the steep hill he refuses to accept the potion because he feels strong enough to accomplish the task. At two-thirds of the way she urges him a second time to make use of the potion, but again he rejects it as detrimental to his attempt to prove his manhood. Sadly, once he has reached the top of the mountain, indeed, he collapses and dies of a broken, exhausted heart. When she realizes that he has passed away, she "threw away the vessel containing the potion, scattering its contents so that the mountain was well sprinkled with it, and the land and surrounding area much improved. Many good plants were found there which took root because of the potion" (85).

Not surprisingly, she dies of a broken heart as well, though her death is brought about by emotional stress, whereas he had died as the result of foolish thinking and hubris. Her father deeply mourns the loss of his daughter, expressing a very similar intensity of sorrow: "The king fell to the ground in a swoon, and he could speak, he lamented loudly" (85). All his regret, however, is too late, which allows us to recognize a certain level of transgression in his behavior. Marie does not provide any specific clues as to the emotional relationship between father and daughter, but the framework and conclusion clearly indicate that the father harbored too passionate, erotic, feelings for his daughter. Rape does not occur here, but the king rigidly imposes his will upon his daughter because he is bent on keeping her entirely for himself, trying to hold on to her as his possession.⁹

The key symbol for the hidden sexual desires seems to be the vessel with the magical potion that, once spilled on the ground, brings out many good plants, which has to be read as a poetic representation of coitus (sperma), fertilization, and regeneration.¹⁰ Insofar as the father had set up this condition which only can be

⁹ To claim that this *lai* "contains in some deep sense a conflict of genres and of genders within the context of an impossible choice of *gendre* (MF 'son-in-law') and that "To the masculinist, epic world of unmediated brute force, in which a challenge passes from father to would-be-son-in-law, is opposed another way of being in the world" (Bloch, *The Anonymous Marie de France*, 2003, 90), seems to muddy the issue more than necessary.

¹⁰ Fasciano, "La Mythologie," 1974, 79–85.

met with the help of such a potion, we can clearly perceive the implicit desire the father held for his daughter. He cannot rape her, but just as King Antiochus had found in his daughter the needed solace and comfort, so the Breton king of the Pistrians in Marie's *lai* would have liked to have had carnal knowledge with his daughter. In a significant deviation of the basic narrative topos, Marie has her female heroine die from grief, whereas the princess in *Historia Apollonii* finally even accepts her father as her lover and allows him to sleep with her for a long time, which God ultimately punishes by means of a thunderbolt that strikes him to death.¹¹

There are numerous other examples of incest in medieval literature, which could mean both that the poets reflected upon this social problem repeatedly in order to combat this crime, and that they felt inspired by the motif, borrowed from classical antiquity, because of its profoundly transgressive nature.¹² Let us now turn to Heinrich von Neustadt's *Apollonius von Tyrland* (ca. 1300) in order to grasp how this poet dealt with the double motif of incest and rape. Heinrich von Neustadt based his Middle High German version neither on Geoffrey of Viterbor's *Pantheon* (ca. 1187) nor on the *Gesta Romanorum* (fourteenth century), but apparently, according to Wolfgang Achnitz, on one of the countless mixed versions of the original Latin text, *Historia Apollonii*.¹³

Heinrich identifies himself at the end of his romance as a medical doctor in Neustadt near Vienna. The specific title that he uses indicates that he seems to have studied at a university, perhaps at Salerno, Italy, or Montpellier, France. In fact, there are several clues within the narrative which reveal the author's medical knowledge, such as when the young doctor Filominus in Ephesos tries to revive the seemingly dead woman and applies a wide range of specific medications which actually achieve the desired goal. Heinrich also composed a religious narrative, *Von gotes zuokunft* —The Arrival of God), and in both of his works he emphasizes his origin, Neustadt, but he must have lived and worked in Vienna, only six miles away, as we can tell from numerous personal sarcastic observations about the people in that metropolis. Heinrich owned several properties in Vienna, as confirmed by a number of documents, and was married twice, perhaps three times, first to a woman called Melein, thereupon to a woman called Katherina, and finally to a woman called Alheit. The poet entertained a close friendship with the chef Heinrich who was in the service of the high ranking Bohemian nobleman Tobias of Beschyně. The latter was murdered in 1307, but he is mentioned in our text as being still alive, hence *Apollonius von Tyrland* must have been composed

¹¹ Matino, "L'incesto," 1986, 247–55; Liborio, "La cancellazione, 2000, 11–22.

¹² Archibald, *Incest*, 2001.

¹³ Achnitz, *Babylon und Jerusalem*, 2002, 259–60.

before, that is, perhaps around 1300. In comparison with the Latin *Historia Apollonii*, Heinrich added considerably new and extensive sections and expanded the romance quite remarkably.¹⁴ Our interest, however, will be focused only on the initial rape scene.

The narrator offers considerably more details and specific background regarding King Antiochus who commands much land and wealth, emphasizing also the great happiness that he experiences with his wife and their daughter, a delightful girl, incomparable in her beauty and charm. As we are told, the master of nature (God) had not spared anything in her: “Sie was vil recht gemessen: / Von den elementen vier / War es peraittet schier” (117–19; She was properly measured by the four elements and well created).¹⁵ As is common both in courtly romances and in the international fairy tale tradition, when she had reached her nubile age, her mother died, which creates the dangerous moral trap for her father (125). Because of the sexual temptation, he loses, as the narrator emphasizes, both body and soul, and so his only daughter (127–28).

The young princess becomes so attractive that kings, princes, and other high ranking personalities vie for her hand (184), and many tournaments and other knightly games take place where each one tries to demonstrate his outstanding qualities and skills, a very common theme in courtly literature (e.g., Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, Konrad von Würzburg's *Partonopier und Meliur*). But all these efforts to affirm courtly virtues and qualities are for naught because the devil, as the narrator underscores, makes his power known and seduces the father to seek his daughter's sexual favor. Whereas in Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius* (ca. 1200) the devil is accused of having been responsible for the brother's seduction of his sister, once both have been orphaned and live very close to each other,¹⁶ here the situation appears to be even worse because the father commits incest with his own child—unfortunately also a very common theme in world literature since antiquity, and so also wide-spread in the Middle Ages.¹⁷

¹⁴ Birkhan, *Leben und Abenteuer*, 2001, 393–403; see also Schneider, *Chiffren*, 2004.

¹⁵ Heinrichs von Neustadt 'Apollonius von Tyrland', 1967; the research literature on Heinrich's *Apollonius* is not extensive; see, for instance, Lienert, *Deutsche Antikenromane*, 2001, 163–75; Junk, *Transformationen*, 2003; Schultz-Balluff, *Dispositio picta*, 2006. The topic of rape, however, does not seem to have attracted much attention.

¹⁶ Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius der gute Sünder*, 1986, vv. 303–420. For an extensive overview of the relevant interpretative studies, see Duckworth, *Gregorius*, 1985, 23–63; see also, for a variety of approaches and focuses on Hartmann's works, the contributions to *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, 2005.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Rank, *Das Inzest-Motiv*, 1926; now also available in English translation, *The Incest Theme*, 1992; Santiago, *The Children of Oedipus*, 1973; Neumann, *Das Inzestverbot*, 1991; Mikat, *Die Inzestverbote*, 1993; van Gelder, *Close Relationships*, 2005; Ashliman and Duggan, "Incest," 2005, 432–44.

The narrator bitterly complains with Lady Minne (Courtly Love) about this perversion of the natural order: "Fraw Mynne, das ist unrecht tan, / Ir seytt schuldig gar dar an" (148–49; Lady Minne, that was badly done, you are responsible for it). Love itself is accused of having falsely blinded the father regarding the inappropriateness of seeking carnal knowledge of his own daughter because it constitutes impure love ("Das ist nicht raine mynne," 154; This is not pure love). The narrator appeals to Lady Love to obey the laws of nature and God's own rules that strictly contradict the father's behavior. But since she does not prove to be open to any advice, and since she has committed serious mistakes already in the past, as the example of the illicit love affair between Tristan and Isolde, his uncle's wife, confirms (166–70), not much can be expected from Love. Specifically, he accuses Lady Love of being a murderess and inveigling its subjects, considering the outcome of the tryst involving these two young people: "Wie mort ir nicht Tristranden / Und Yostten von Irlanden!" (175–76; How you murdered Tristan and Ysot from Ireland!). The narrator evokes a number of further insults and accusations against *Minne*, claiming that she is a sick woman (213) who prostitutes herself (214–15).

After these theoretical reflections, the narrator turns to the king again and describes in surprising details his psychological condition, lusting after his own daughter. He orders the male servants leave her room with the explanation that he would like to have council with his daughter in private. The subsequent rape is described very briefly and confined to the basic outcome of the father's violent action who is seriously condemned for this criminal behavior:

Der vatter wart seines Kindes man,
Das Kind sein weyb: das ist ubel gethan.
Sust sprach er ir der keusche strigk,
Die raine die verlost den sigk. (241–44)

[The father became his daughter's [child's] husband
the child became his wife: this was done in an evil manner.
Thus he broke her rope of chastity;¹⁸
the pure woman lost the victory.]

Similarly as in the antique romance, the young distraught woman then stays behind, and a nurse arrives who witnesses the consequences of her terrible sexual violation and immediately inquires about the circumstances. Again, the young woman does not directly identify her father as the perpetrator, but in contrast to the Latin text where the victim resorts to metaphorical language to circumscribe

¹⁸ Despite the identity of the terms, this has nothing to do with the myth of the chastity belt, an alleged instrument used by medieval husbands to protect their wives' chastity; see my *The Medieval Chastity Belt*, 2007.

her father's crime, and then directly addresses her suffering from having been raped (113), here the young woman seriously tries to hide what has truly happened to her: "Mir hatt ain siechtum meinen leib / Newlichen undertan" (256–57; I have been attacked by a sickness recently).

The violated princess is simply deeply embarrassed and tries to hide the fact that she has been raped: "Allsust wolt sy es verschwigen han / Durch rechte weypliche scham" (258–59). Her shame extends even to her father whose honor she wants to protect because his sexual perpetration would be a profound disgrace if it would become known in public (260–62). But the nurse Pynell immediately perceives behind her deceptive words the terrible truth, and she also recognizes blood on the maid's skirt, which confirms her suspicion: "Fraw, ditz hatt gethan ain man . . ." (272; "lady, a man has done this . . ."). Not awaiting the response, she immediately thinks through the next steps and assures the young woman that this crime would not be pardonable, and that the perpetrator, whoever he might be, would surely be apprehended and receive the appropriate punishment: "Er mueß sicherleichen / Lesterlichen sterben tod / Der ew gethan hatt dise nott" (278–80; "He who has committed this terrible deed against you must surely die a miserable death").

In the classical account of *Apollonius of Tyre*, the princess had not hesitated at all to identify the crime which she had suffered as rape, and she had also, almost in the same breath, revealed her father as the rapist, thereby expressing her enormous anger about having been victimized by her own kin who has thus become guilty of incest: "'And where is my father? Dear nurse,' she went on, 'if you understand what has happened: for me the name of father has ceased to exist . . .'" (113). In Heinrich von Neustadt's version, the king's daughter reveals deep distress over the fact that she has been raped by her own father, and grievously laments the loss of two entirely different aspects: "' . . . Das an mir sind verdorben / Zwen herliche namen, / Deß ich mich pillich mueß schamen: / Ich was ain magett und vatters kind, / Die paide an mir verdorben sind" (286–90; [I have to lament] that with me two wonderful names have been lost, what I have to be truly ashamed about: I was a virgin and a father's daughter; both are lost with me). Only then does she finally reveal the full truth: "Deß kind ich waß, des weib pin ich" (291; He, whose child I was, his wife I am). For her this realization represents such enormous shame that she wants to die and appeals to God: "' . . . Erlöse mich von diser nott, / Send mir den grymmen tod! . . .'" (293–94; absolve me from this suffering and send the bitter death to me).

In fact, the princess then starts to carry out her plan to commit suicide, but the nurse is able to rescue her in the last minute, wrestling her down to the floor.¹⁹ She

¹⁹ To commit suicide was considered a deadly sin in the Middle Ages, unless a woman, for instance, wanted to preserve her virginity from a rapist. See Minois, *Histoire du suicide*, 1995; Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols., 1998 and 2000; Classen, "Desperate Lovers," 1999, 207–26.

appeals to the desperate young woman to be reasonable and to keep in mind what shame this suicide would cast on the royal house and on her in particular.

She appeals to the maid to accept the situation as is and to let it pass in silence; she herself would keep quiet about it (315), a motif that we later will encounter in the late-medieval heroic verse epic "*Das Meerweib*," where the victim's husband urges his wife to be quiet about her having been raped by the sea monster. According to the nurse, other people have experienced much worse situations (318), and she herself would find good advice on how to handle this case (320). This provides the narrator the opportunity to engage in a pretend discussion with Lady Venus whom he accuses of having acted badly in this case (325). However, he himself admits that love has smiled upon him, so he would not want to chastise Venus much further who has repeatedly assisted him: "Gab mir ewr hilffe guten ratt" (332; your help gave me good advice). Nevertheless, the narrator still hastens to criticize Love for being too kind and ultimately for not being fair, granting unworthy people the rewards of sweet love, whereas she ought to honor more the worthy ones and make the unworthy ones dig out turnips (335–42; metaphorical expression), that is, turn them into peasants.

The author unequivocally condemns the king for his misdeed against his own daughter, and even underscores his evil character by emphasizing that he continued sleeping with the maid, not even trying to hide this incestuous relationship: "Wa er gestund oder gesaß, / Offenlich er sich vermeiß / Das er läg haimleich / Pey seiner tochter mynnikleich" (347–50; Wherever he stood or sat, he openly related that he slept with his daughter in erotic embrace). In the Latin *Apollonius* the king kept up a pretense of being a good father and devoted parent, "but inside his own walls he delighted in being his daughter's husband" (115). Whereas in Heinrich's text the nurse consoles the young woman and ensures her that she would find a solution (320), the ancient source presents a very different situation: "and she encouraged the reluctant girl to satisfy her father's desire" (115). Despite these differences, however, both texts clearly express great discomfort with the fact that the father has raped his own daughter. In the late-medieval romance the king does not even try to hide his own perpetration, though he also announces, as in the Latin text, the availability of his daughter as a bride for the one successful wooer who can solve a riddle. Nevertheless, just as in the case of Marie de France's "*Les deuz amanz*," the true intention with this riddle, or challenge, is to keep the daughter all for himself as his own wife: "Das die tochter pey im pelaib" (353; that the daughter stayed with him).

The subsequent development does not interest us in our context, but we can underscore once again that also in this German version by Heinrich von Neustadt the crime of rape, combined with incest, is treated as a horrendous perpetration that undermines all standards of morality and ethics. The narrator displays considerable sympathy for the young victim, but he does not indicate any way out

of this situation because even the appearance of Apollonius von Tirlandt at the king's court, in close parallel to the ancient source, does not change anything. Although he solves the king's riddle, the latter pretends that the answer provided by the young man is far from the truth: "'Pesser kunst dar an leg, ...'" (697; "apply better art . . ."), forcing Apollonius to remove himself, which then sets the stage for the extensive plot development which we do not need to pursue here further once again, particularly because then the theme of 'rape' does no longer matter. Of course, sexual violence continues to plague the protagonists, and Apollonius's daughter Tarsia even suffers from being sold into sexual captivity. There she is forced to serve as a prostitute in a brothel, though she successfully talks her way out of this dilemma and can ultimately discover her father again who frees her from her dangerous situation.

Let us also consider the way that the anonymous narrator in the so-called *Leipziger Apollonius* (first half of the fifteenth century) dealt with this issue.²⁰ He might have been an Augustinian canon of the Leipzig St. Thomas monastery, judging from external and internal evidence, which also finds confirmation in the fact that he obviously worked on the basis of the Latin original and stayed very close to the ancient text. Nevertheless, there are some remarkable and idiosyncratic features here as well which our analysis of the initial rape scene will bring to light.

The fact concerning the death of Antiochus's wife is mentioned quickly, whereas the unmatched beauty of his daughter finds great interest, especially when this beauty unfolds and reaches its peak once she has entered the stage of nubility. Naturally, many wooers arrive who offer great treasures as dowry, which confuses, if not upsets, the father because he himself has become inflamed and desires his own daughter: "in der wise viel he in eine boße hitcziſche falſche libe, das he ſine tochter vorder libete wen ein vater ſin kint thuen ſal" (26; in this way he was affected by an evil, hot, wrong love and loved his daughter more than a father should love his child). This wrong love rages in him like a life-threatening disease, associated with moral sinfulness: "alzo wart he in im ſelber wuetende unde thabende unde vacht in der boßen anevechtunge der falſchen libe" (26; he fell into a rage and struggled very hard in this evil temptation by the wrong love). There is clearly a sense of sickness that affects this man who loses his mind because of his daughter's extraordinary erotic attractiveness, perhaps a form of *amor hereos*, though certainly much worse and even perverted because it results from incestuous desires.²¹

²⁰ *Griseldis*, 1872, 25–81. The manuscript, which also contains several other texts, such as the *Leipziger Äsop* or the *Leipziger Griseldis* is housed today in the Leipzig Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. 1279. For further details, see Knapp, "Leipziger Apollonius," 1985, 684–85. For a detailed description of the manuscript, see Pensel, *Verzeichnis*, 1998, 173–75.

²¹ See Wack, *Lovesickness*, 1990, 15–18, 154–62; she primarily investigates a young man's love for his

The king actually desires to marry his daughter, but he also realizes the shameful perversity of this intention, hiding it carefully from everyone. At the end, however, he can no longer maintain himself because he is lacking self-control: “czu letczet, do he das grusame gedechteniß in sime hertzen nicht lenger erliden konde” (26; finally, when he could no longer stand the cruel [or horrible] thought in his heart). To find a solution, he turns to action, enters his daughter’s bedroom one early morning, and orders all servants out because he claims to have something important to discuss with her. The king is still concerned with his public reputation, as the narrator underscores: “do met beschoente he di boze libe” (25–26; literally: with this he decorated the evil body; meaning: he kept up a pretense).²² But his daughter immediately realizes what his true intentions are and defends herself energetically: “dor werte sie sich alze best konde, aber der vater liß nicht abe, sunder beroubete si irer küschen jungfrowschaft” (26; she defended herself as well as she could, but the father did not let off; instead he robbed her of her chaste virginity).

The rape itself finds hardly any consideration, except that the young woman suffers from physical wounds, as indicated by blood that is dropping onto the floor (26). Nevertheless, she is most concerned with her family’s honor and tries to protect her father from public shame by keeping the crime that he had committed against her a secret: “dor noch hette si des vater untagent gerne vorborgen” (26; thereafter she would have liked to keep hidden the father’s lack of virtue). Next the chambermaid arrives, who quickly realizes that the young woman has been raped, and that she is ready to commit suicide because of the shame associated with it. But here as well she comforts the princess and convinces her to accept her father’s wishes and to refrain from fighting him out of filial respect: “si muste irem vatere sins willen gestaten” (26; she was to grant her father his wish).

Altogether, this anonymous author also deals with this rape scene most critically, condemning the father for his criminal behavior, though he casts him as a man gripped by a perversion of his mind, disturbed by his lustfulness that he cannot control. The narrator emphasizes that the daughter tries in vain to fight back her attacker, signaling thereby the particular heinousness of the father’s sexual transgression against his own daughter. She explains to the maid what has happened to her in slightly different wording, but the content and meaning are the same as in Heinrich’s version or in the Latin original: “mine hochcziet iß vor der rechten tagecziet volbracht: met sülcher boßheit bin ich beflegket” (26; “my

mother or step-mother and does not consider any text from the *Apollonius* tradition. Now see also Allen, *The Wages of Sin*, 2000; Duffin, *Lovers and Livers*, 2005.

²² To avoid errors in printing, I write out the superscript ‘e’ over ‘o’ in “beschoente,” which represents the modern umlaut ‘ö.’ I will follow this practice for all other superscripta as well.

wedding has been performed before the proper time of the specific day: I have been stained with such an evil treatment"). Antiochus finally is severely blamed by the narrator for having failed both in his public role and in his function as a father: "In den selbigen geschichten hilt sich der vater kein sinen börgern alze ein könig unde ein herre, aber do heime hilt he sich kein siner tochter alze ir eliche man" (26; At that time the father did not act like a king and a lord for his subjects, and at home he did not welcome any man for his daughter as her husband).

The private transgression thus emerges as a crime that also carries over to the public, undermining the stability of the entire country. The rape of the princess indicates the degree to which Anthiochia—this is the name for the city where Antiochus rules, but also for his country—is ethically, morally, and also politically in dramatic decline and close to collapse because of the king's failures and shortcomings both as ruler and as father, both in political and in ethical terms. Social, ethical, moral, religious, and legal issues intertwine intimately and force us to read the father's rape as a major transgression endangering the entire society.

In 1461 the Ulm city medical doctor Heinrich Steinhöwel translated the *Apollonius* romance into a prose German version (in manuscript), developing a fairly similar narrative, but the differences to Heinrich von Neustadt's romance are quite noticeable as well. Steinhöwel also introduces the text with a discussion about the royal father raping his daughter, which sheds important light on the continued interest by German audiences in the theme of rape and all its significant implications. Having been born in Weilderstadt near Eßlingen (southern Germany) in 1411 or 1412, Steinhöwel studied medicine at the universities of Vienna, Heidelberg, and Padua, and there, at the famous Italian university, he earned the title of medical doctor in 1443. Already in 1442 he had been appointed provost of the faculty of the liberal arts. Although primarily focused on his profession of medical care, the author was deeply influenced by early-modern humanism and had been exposed to some of the major Italian contributions to literature by Boccaccio and Eneas Silvio Piccolomini, the later Pope Pius II. He worked in Ulm as a physician beginning in 1450, and he began to translate Latin literary texts into German in 1460. Steinhöwel died on March 1, 1479.

His first major publication was the *Pestbüchlein* in 1446 (little book on the pest), but it took until 1471 for his *Apollonius* to appear in print in Augsburg (Günter Zainer) and then for the author to establish a name for himself as a successful writer. The same year his *Griseldis* was printed, a translation of Petrarch's version (*Diß is eyn epistel francisci petrarche, von grosser stetigkeit eyner frauen Grysel gehaissen*; in manuscript first in 1461/1462). In 1474 Steinhöwel published his translation of Boccaccio's *Von den erlauchten Frauen*. Other works from Steinhöwel's

pen and printed in Ulm and elsewhere are the *Ein teütsche Cronica von anfang der welt uncz uff keiser fridrich* (1473) and *Das selb leben Esopi* (1476/1477).²³

Steinhöwel's *Apollonius* closely follows the version as developed in the *Gesta Romanorum*, but he seems to have drawn material from Geoffrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, also known as *Universalis libri qui chronici appellantur* (ca. 1185), since several passages were directly borrowed from that text. Overall, as Helmut Melzer emphasizes, the author was strongly interested in adding an element of moralizing, and in this regard the theme of rape greatly attracted his attention.²⁴ As in the Latin source, and in conformity with the universal theme of a royal father committing incest with his daughter, the princess is described as most beautiful and virtuous who attracts many wooers who would like to marry her and so offer enormous treasures in return for her hand: "Vmb das begeret ir menig man / von kuengklichem geschlecht zuo wibe / mit vnscheczlicher grosser zuo gaube" (5r; Therefore many men of royal descent desired her as wife and offered immeasurable gifts).²⁵

While her father is considering whom among the contenders he should choose as a bridegroom for his daughter, he himself suddenly inflames in hot passion for the young woman. The narrator finds this deeply troubling and regards this phenomenon as inexplicable: "Wais ich nit von was vngerechter vnuaetterlicher begirde / vnd scharpfen flammen / er enczindet ward / in vnordenlicher lieb in seiner tochter / mer wann ainem vngesypten zymlich wer / ich geschwige aines vatters" (5r; I do not know what improper fatherly desire and burning flames put the fire of wrong love for his daughter into him, more than would be appropriate for a non-related person, not even to talk of a father). Whereas the ancient source depicts the father as a victim of his own passion ("he rushed into his daughter's room," 113), here the king deliberates for a long time his evil plan and then proceeds to realize it quite methodically: "das er im fuerseczet / mit ir die werck der vnkuschait zuo verbringen. Aines tages gieng er in die kamer seiner tochter . . ." (5r; . . . he decided to carry out the work of adultery with her. One day he walked into the chamber of his daughter . . .). But then the narrator also emphasizes how much her father is overcome by uncontrollable lust and forces his daughter to sleep with him: "das er seiner tochter gewalt an legt / so krefftenklich / das ir macht / des vatters boesen willen nit widerstan mocht" (5r; he exerted violence against his daughter so powerfully that she in [her limited] strength could not resist her father's evil wish).

²³ Henkel, "Heinrich Steinhöwel," 1993, 51–70; Classen, "Heinrich Steinhöwel," 1997, 276–80; see also Katz, "'Frauen-Bilder,'" 1999; Hess, *Heinrich Steinhöwels "Griseldis"*, 1975.

²⁴ Melzer, "Nachwort," 1975), IV. I will cite from this facsimile edition.

²⁵ The facsimile does not come with pagination.

In contrast to Heinrich von Neustadt's version, the princess does not try to hide her true situation to the chambermaid who, upon entering the room, here as well immediately recognizes clear signs of a sexual crime. In the Latin source, the victim emphasizes that the name of 'father' has ceased to exist for her, expressing vehement anger and bitterness about this case of incest. In Steinhöwel's version, on the other hand, the young woman responds slightly differently: "vff dise stund sind zwen edel namen von mir entwichen / kuenschaft / vnd vaetterliche liebe / die ich baide verloren han" (5r; in this hour two noble words have fled from me: chastity and fatherly love; I have lost both). Moreover, she painfully complains about how much her father has destroyed her future happiness: "vnd ee ich gemechlet bin / bin ich mit der groesten suend geschmaecht worden" (5r-5v; and before I have been married I have been dishonored with the greatest sin).

Unmistakably, the narrator identifies the young woman's suffering as one of the worst case scenarios and has her characterize the father's behavior as morally most condemnable. The rest of the novel closely follows the ancient source. However, Steinhöwel deviated from it later in one other remarkable detail. In *Apollonius of Tyre*, the protagonist learns from a helmsman that "King Antiochus has been struck by God's thunderbolt as he was lying in bed with his own daughter" (137). Steinhöwel has this helmsman report, by contrast, "der kuenig Antiochus mit seiner tochter ist von dem hellischen feur uff dem mer verbrent / vnd dar jnn versuncken" (16v; King Antiochus, together with his daughter, was burnt by hellish fire on the sea and sank down into it [drowned in it]). Heinrich von Neustadt followed closely his source and also has Antiochus being killed by a thunderbolt while sleeping with his daughter (2282-84).

As we can conclude, the classical tale of Apollonius of Tyre and his many tragic experiences also enjoyed great popularity among the German audiences during the Middle Ages and far beyond, actually until the seventeenth century at least.²⁶ Undoubtedly, one of the explanations for the fascination with this timeless literary masterpiece in German translation, or adaptation, was the focus on the encounter with the East, then also with monsters and other strange creatures, all rich and fanciful additions to the original text. But the treatment of rape, insidiously combined with the crime of incest, regularly sets the groundwork and invites the readers to consider the terrible crime affecting the innocent daughter. Although she is immediately prepared to commit suicide, each author has her then change her mind because the chambermaid intervenes, gives her comfort, and convinces her, probably for the preservation of her father's public honor and that of her whole royal family, to keep quiet and simply to let her father continue this

²⁶ Gotzkowsky, "Volksbücher", 1991, 184-91.

incestuous relationship. But all the later authors have God intervene and kill the evil perpetrator, paving the way for the virtuous outsider Apollonius to achieve glory and triumph in his life, although he has also to go through much personal suffering.

The crime of rape identifies one of the worst sinners, King Antiochus himself. Sadly, no one is capable of intervening and preventing him from continuing with his criminal behavior, except for God. The young woman, whom none of the narrators ever allow to speak up again, has to undergo a long period of sexual torture, and she is at the end, together with her father, simply finished off by divine intervention. Within the larger context, however, there is no doubt that the theme of rape was very much in the mind of the authors and their audiences, and that they viewed it in the worst possible light as a serious perpetration, both as sexual violence and as a sin against God.

The threat for a young woman to be raped by her father also emerges in another verse narrative from the late thirteenth century, but which falls into a very different literary tradition. In *Mai und Beafloer*, an anonymous Middle High German romance, the Roman emperor experiences the same dilemma of having lost his wife to death, and fearing that his daughter might find a wooer who would take her away from him as his wife. Beafloer can escape, however, and reaches, with the help of God, the shores of Greece where the young prince, once she has been brought to the shore, quickly falls in love with her. Although his mother regards the young woman with great suspicion, not knowing anything about her social background and being afraid that she might have been expelled from her home country for having committed some great crime, Mai finally marries the foreign princess. This irritates his mother so much that she leaves her son's court and retires to her own castle. From there she plots her daughter-in-law's assassination by means of falsified letters.

In the meantime Mai has been called by his uncle, the king of Spain, to rescue him from the attacks by Arabs, and although his wife is already pregnant, the Greek count departs for his crusade and journeys to the Iberian Peninsula. In the meantime, after his wife has delivered a male child, a messenger is sent out to the father to provide him with the good news. Two counts, who are in charge of Beafloer's well-being, also send a letter confirming the truth of the matter. But the messenger makes a stop at the castle where Beafloer's mother-in-law resides who deceptively offers him so much food and wine that he falls asleep. During the night she falsifies the letters which now say that Beafloer had slept with two priests, and as a result she had delivered a wolf-boy.

When Mai finally receives the letters while he is already on his return home after a successful military campaign, he immediately falls into deep despair. Nevertheless, he writes back to his counts ordering them to wait with all decisions

until his return. But this letter also gets into the hands of the evil mother-in-law who falsifies this one as well. Now the two counts are ordered to execute Beafloer and her son immediately upon receipt of the letter, otherwise they and their families would have to die in her stead.

General despair sets in, but Beafloer comforts them and soon enough secretly leaves the country with the same boat in which she had arrived in Greece. Again, with God's help she quickly traverses the sea and reaches the shore of Italy, where her foster-father, a Roman senator, discovers her and her son, and takes her in, hiding Beafloer's true identity to protect her against her monstrous father. In the meantime, Mai has arrived home and learns the terrible news that his wife and son have been executed, as everyone tells him. At first he wants to commit suicide because of his enormous grief, but then he investigates the case and learns the truth that his mother had falsified the letters trying to assassinate Beafloer. In his fury, Mai then kills his mother (matricide), but his grief and sorrow do not go away thereby. Finally, the bishop admonishes him to seek help from the pope who alone could grant him absolution for having committed this egregious crime. The young man travels to Italy, where he eventually meets his wife and son again, to all of their great joy. The Roman emperor publicly admits his original evil intention with his daughter, then steps down from his throne, and appoints Mai as his successor.²⁷

There are many themes that would deserve closer analysis, particularly the topic of the innocently accused queen,²⁸ but here I would like to focus on the father's attempt to rape his daughter and on her astounding success in freeing herself from his clutches. After all, Beafloer's entire tragic life is predicated on this very moment when her father tries to violate her sexually, so it can well be defined as the critical theme which launches a series of sufferings for this young woman.

At first sight the family situation is quite the same as in all the *Apollonius* versions with a mighty ruler who marries a lovely woman who then conceives and

²⁷ Mai und Beafloer, 2006. The relevant research literature can be found there. As to the remarkable dimension of emotions dealt with in this romance, see my study "Roman Sentimental," 2006, 83–100. The text of *Mai und Beafloer* has also been edited by Christian Kiening and Katharina Mertens Fleury (Zürich 2008), available online at: www.mediaevistik.uzh.ch/downloads/MaiundBeafloer.pdf (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011). Apart from some different editorial decisions, such as whether to write out abbreviations or not, the use of 'j' versus 'i,' etc., there are no real differences to my own edition, and this despite Kiening's and Martens Fleury's surprisingly acrimonious attempt to discredit my work. In their introduction they point out differences in reading the original text, which often proves to be rather ambiguous and open to debate.

²⁸ Black, *Medieval Narratives*, 2003, 57–61. There are a number of analogues with parallel medieval romances, such as *La Menekine*, Jans Enikel's *Weltchronik* (a short narrative within this chronicle), and the *Roman du Comte d'Anjou*. See also Buschinger, "Skizzen," 1988, 31–48. See also Ebenbauer, "Beafloer-Blancheflor," 1988, 73–90.

delivers a child, but then dies several years later. She leaves her husband behind as a grieving man, but he then turns his attention to his daughter and tries to commit incest. The author of *Mai und Beafloer* takes the opportunity to develop a lengthy and detailed description of how the girl grows up, acquires much learning, and develops as an ideal female character, shining in her virtue and intelligence: “Ir durch leuchtlic bliundev iugent / was gezirt mit reiner tugent” (413–14; her shining and flowering youth was ornamented with pure virtue). Both parents make great efforts to educate their daughter to the best of their abilities, and they allow the public to get a good view of her at numerous events, such as tournaments and court festivals. But when she has reached the age of ten, her mother suddenly passes away, leaving behind a devastated family, with both father and daughter mourning profoundly. Everyone at court joins their lamentations and crying, and they comfort the emperor as much as possible, helping him in the funeral of the deceased empress.

Significantly, the father soon convenes a council because he needs advice whom to entrust his daughter with because “wan si pi mir niht wesen mac (563; she cannot stay with me). He is obviously concerned with the danger that a father alone cannot easily raise his daughter without evoking suspicions and rumors about a possibly too intimate relationship: “Daz envuget sich mir niht / vnd waere ou[ch] ein wunderlich geschich[t], / solt ich ir ane muter phlegen” (569–71; It would not be appropriate and would, indeed, be a strange matter if I were to raise her without the mother).

Could we assume that the narrator here has previous accounts about incestuous fathers in mind, particularly among the royal dynasties, such as *Apollonius of Tyre*? Perhaps this passage hides an intertextual reference, but we can also gather that the author might have drawn from contemporary concerns about sexual transgressions leading to the problem of incest.²⁹ At any rate, the emperor is reasonable enough in this situation to seek help in raising his young daughter, whom he then consigns to the care of the Senator Roboal and his wife Benigna who do not have children of their own. Benigna in particular assumes the role of a mother for Beafloer and urges her early on to moderate her mourning and to control all of her emotions in order to be pleasant for everyone at court: “ze mazzen nider vnd ho / soltu dein gemute tragen, / wil du got vnd der werlde

²⁹ The prohibition of incest has been virtually universal throughout time, though the differences in the definition of this ‘crime’ still characterize individual societies in specific periods; see Herlihy, “Making Sense, 1990, 1–16; Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, “Incestuous Marriages, 2003, 77–95. For the perception of incest as a most dramatic catalyst for the downfall even of a whole country within the literary discourse, see Stahuljak, *Bloodless Genealogies*, 2005, 50–53 (with respect to *Roman de Thebes*).

behaben" (702–04; allow your mind/mood to go up or down in moderation, if you want to be pleasing to God and the world).³⁰

Her father comes visiting regularly, but he is the only one who is allowed to enter her chamber where she is performing intensive prayers and religious meditations. The emperor then caresses and kisses her, which his daughter happily welcomes because she perceives it all as a sign of his fatherly love: "Swanne sei der chunnich sus vant, / so gie er zu ir alzehant / vnd troute vnd chuste sie / vnd wont ir gutlichen pi. / Daz nam si von im gar fur vol / vnd tet ir in ir herzen wol, / daz er si so gerne sach" (771–77; When the emperor found her there, he went directly to her, embracing and kissing her, being very friendly with her. She welcomed it well, and it pleased her in her heart that he liked to see her so much).

Similarly as in Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius*, however, this intimacy soon proves to be too dangerous and seductive because the devil, as the narrator emphasizes, utilizes this situation to achieve his own goal to mislead people and to capture their souls.³¹ But Hartmann presented a very unique situation insofar as the two perpetrators are brother and sister, obviously not far apart in age, who live without parental supervision because they are orphans. Moreover, when the brother begins with his sexual attack, his sister does not know how to, or even whether she should, defend herself. She is torn between two options, both of which would be most damaging for them. If she were to keep silent, her brother would have his will with her, leading to incest, whereas if she were to scream, calling for help from the court, both of them would lose their honor (385–90).³² So, in a way, she cannot resist her brother, finds herself in a desperate dilemma, and allows the young man to rape her.

Turning back to *Mai und Beaflo*r, we encounter quite a different framework because here an older man, widower, badly deprived of his entire spiritual and physical needs since the loss of his wife, suddenly discovers that he could find compensation with his own daughter and attempts to rape her. The narrator makes a great effort, much more even than Hartmann von Aue in his *Gregorius*, to attribute the father's sexual perversion to the intervention of the devil who had

³⁰ Albrecht Classen, "Mai und Beaflo: Familientragödie, die Macht der Gefühle und rationales Kalkül in einem 'sentimentalen' Roman des späten 13. Jahrhunderts," *Futhark* 4 (2009): 85–107.

³¹ Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius*, 1984, 273ff. The narrator explicitly attributes the sexual transgression committed by the two young people, brother and sister, to the workings of the devil (303–22); for an English translation, see *The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, 2001, 165–214. For a theological interpretation of this incest scene, see, for instance, Hallich, *Poetologisches*, 1995, 62–69.

³² See also Duckworth, *Gregorius*, 1985, 23–33, who summarizes the history of research, but then focuses primarily on the critical evaluation of the protagonist's guilt from a theological perspective.

already been badly irritated by the young daughter's constant prayer and worship (795–99).

Significantly, Beafloer would also have fallen to the sexual temptation, as the text implies, if she had not turned her whole being so intently to God, which protected her from the devil's snares (801–07). The use of the verb "genesen" (805; to recover, to stay well; here in its past tense form) indicates that the narrator assumes that young women like his heroine would easily give up themselves to any attempt by a man to seduce them sexually.³³ By the same token, the father proves to be weaker in his moral resolve and thus he becomes the devil's victim: "Do im daz niht entohte, / do chert er gegen dem vater hin / vnd verwandelt dem den sin. / Von rechten sinnen er in schiet" (808–11; Since this did not help him [to seduce the daughter], he turned to the father and changed his mind. He separated him from his right mind). In other words, for the author sexual transgressions prove to be highly likely in many situations, irrespective of a person's age or gender. Only God's direct intervention can provide the necessary protection.

Reflecting upon this emotional aspect, the narrator expresses his great surprise about the workings of allegorized love since she has acted here in an inappropriate manner against the precepts of nature. More specifically, then, he insists that the father's behavior could not be called "minne" (823; courtly love), which is thereby identified more specifically as the experience of love within narrowly defined limits and subject to significant control mechanisms according to the courtly ideals. Although the narrator indicates a considerable degree of hesitation to relate what next happened in the scene with father and daughter, he underscores how much he is attempting to stay close to his source and not to falsify the original account, wherever he might have derived his material from (778–84).³⁴ In other words, both the attempted rape and the incestuous relationship pursued by the emperor meet with strong opposition on his part, and he clearly conveys his radical criticism to his audience, though he still refers to the devil to exculpate the father for his sinful approach (785–90).

But the emperor's attempts to rape his daughter do not easily work as planned, and the entire situation follows quite a different path because the young woman proves to be a highly skilled rhetorician who knows how to parry her father's sexual attacks with verbal responses that leave him rather unnerved and distracted, not quite sure how to understand her ambiguous words and confusing counter-strategies. When he informs her point-blank that she will have to submit under his wishes, formulating, as he thinks, unequivocally his sexual desire—"".

³³ For a sensitive reading of the numerous cases of rape that affect, of course, primarily young women, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (ca. 1390), which might well serve as a good foil for our own case, though *Mai und Beafloer* was composed ca. 1290/1300, see Mast, "Rape," 1999, 103–32.

³⁴ I have discussed the poet's reference to his source in the introduction to my edition and translation, xx–xxiii. See also Haug, *Literaturtheorie*, 1985, 22–23.

. . Ich wil minen willen hand / mit dir' . . ." (858–59; "... I want to have my will with you you . . ."), she simply replies that she would always be ready to fulfill this wish, whatever it might be (859–62), insofar as she wants to be his obedient daughter. Of course, as the narrator hastens to add, she does not yet comprehend the true meaning of his statement, not even when he explains further that he would like to lie down with her, body to body: "'... ich wil dir liplich pi geligen'" (867; I want to lie next to you in loving embrace). But again, she insists that she would follow any and all of his orders, assuming that they do not imply anything else than what the superficial meaning of the words convey: "'Vater, des wirstu niht verzigē, / ligen, sitzen oder stan, / bin ich dir alles vnderthan'" (868–70; "Father, I will not disobey, and I will lie, sit, or stand, I will be obedient). After all, as she reminds him, this is what would be expected from a well-educated and obedient daughter.

Remarkably, the emperor had long planned this rape, and might have brooded about it for several weeks, as he announces to his daughter upon his arrival in her room: "'... sich, ez muez ot nu sin, / des ich nur lange han gedaht . . .'" (854–55; "... see, it must happen now what I have pondered for a long time . . ."). In fact, facing his apparently overly willing daughter, he feels almost dumbfounded, so he quickly proceeds to the next stage and declares openly his intentions, but he uses a metaphorical term that does not really help him to make her understand his concrete plan with her, if she is really that ignorant at first: "'Wir suln bedev ensampt hie / ein minne spil machen'" (878–79; "We will play together a game of love"). At this point, the young woman still seems to be somewhat naive and does not quite grasp the deeper meaning of these terms (perhaps deliberately so) because she laughs aloud, perhaps out of insecurity, perhaps out of embarrassment insofar as she reprimands him somewhat that he has almost transgressed a fundamental line of proper behavior: "'... Es ist wider vater sit, / daz du so versuchest mich . . .'" (884–85; "It is against fatherly conduct that you test me in this way").³⁵

Obviously, all her childlike behavior and naive responses had been a protective measure not to let the realization dawn upon her or to face the horror scenario that her own father might pursue evil intentions against her. She goes so far as to appeal to his sense of honor and wisdom which would automatically prevent him from committing the crime that she is now afraid he might have in mind: "'... Ich erchenne wol so witzich dich, / daz du iht brichest diu reinecheit / vnd daz mir immer herzenleit / von dinen schulden geschiht, / wan du hast nur triwen phliht'"

³⁵ Her laughter indicates, once again, how complex this human behavior was viewed already in the Middle Ages, since laughter could express hatred, disgust, happiness, fear, or insecurity. See, for instance, Verdon, *Rire*, 2001; Moretti, *La ragione*, 2001; then the contributions to *Humour, History and Politics*, (2002); *Lachgemeinschaften*, 2005. See also the contributions to *Laughter in the Middle Ages*, 2010.

(886–90; “. . . I know that you are so intelligent not to break your purity and thus to cause me heart-felt pain for the rest of my life because of you because you are a very loyal person”).

Her father quickly grows tired of her lengthy speech and cuts her short, simply telling her that she must grant him sex (891–94). But Beafloer does not easily give in and appeals to his sense as a Christian (897), to his awareness of his political role as emperor (898), to his function as her father (900–01), and then once again to his Christian religion, reminding him of Christ’s passion and His innocently spilled blood (902–05). Moreover, she urges him to control himself and thus to display manly wisdom, or strength (906), to keep the public shame in mind if his transgression were to become general knowledge (907–10), and finally to preserve his own reputation. She puts the concern for herself into the background, and emphasizes that he could lose his worthiness and honor if he were to proceed with his plans: “wan daz ich furcht diner werdicheit / wer da von ennihtet / vnd din ere entrihtet” (912–14; I fear for your worthiness [reputation] that could be lost, and your honor could be ruined).

In unison with the narrator, Beafloer also refers to the devil who threatens to manipulate her father, seducing him to commit incest with his own daughter (921–22). However, all her arguments bear no fruit; instead they incense her father even further who then proceeds to take actions, ripping off her coat and wrestling her to the floor, which the narrator identifies, in a clear understatement (litotes) as “vnvaterlich[]” (927; unfatherly). In fact, he tells her that since she is not submitting herself voluntarily under his will, he must resort to physical violence, which quickly leads to his victory, “wan er was et ir zestarc” (935; since he was too strong for her).

Then, however, in a most amazing turnaround of events, while she is already lying supinely on the floor, having been crushed by the emperor, she conceives of a new strategy that ultimately proves to be successful. Having prayed to God for his assistance, or to grant her a quick death, she suddenly regains strength and begins to laugh, as if to indicate her own happiness about his sexual plans with her and to lull his suspicion (944). But she begs her father to listen to her words before he might proceed with his plans, which he surprisingly grants, yet without allowing her to get up. Beafloer emphasizes that she has an idea that would be fruitful for both of them, but she needs to get up for a short while to explain the specifics to him fully. She underscores that she could not do anything against him at any rate and would be entirely under his control, so it would not hurt him at all if he allowed her to stand up (961–64). This argument finally works and he grants her that freedom, but the young woman still shows clear signs of shock, if not trauma, as the narrator observes most sensitively: “Vor vorhten si was enblichen, / di varn ir was entwichen” (965–66; Fear had made her face white, there was no color left). Nevertheless, as soon as both have stood up, she does the completely

unexpected and lovingly hugs her father and kisses him deceptively (968–69), although, as the narrator underscores, all her intentions are geared toward protecting her chastity (970). Unmistakably, her strategy is now bent on misleading her father to the best of her abilities, insofar as she pretends to be erotically in love with him as well and that she likewise wants to enjoy a sexual union with him: “... ich tuns als gern als tu iz tust” (975; “... I do it as happily as you do...”). However, in order to realize his plan, he ought to listen to her advice and prevent any rumors to spread. As a reward, she would be possibly the best mistress for him: “... Ich wil dir also fugen, / daz dich sein muez genugen” (979–80; “... I will arrange it for you in such a way that you will be very pleased with it...”).³⁶

Beafloer offers her father the proverbial carrot, suggesting a much more pleasurable experience with her if he allows her to abstain from sexual intercourse at that very moment. She convinces him that anything he might do with her on the spot could easily lead to a loss of his honor: “... Ich tuns wan durch din ere, / der furht ich an dir sere...” (989–90; “... I do it all keeping your honor in mind for which I am very concerned”). The emperor cannot help it but to submit to her plans, though he complains bitterly about her ruse and clever strategy: “... Dir sint liste vil bereit. / Du wilt dich mit den listen / vor mir alsus vristen” (984–86; “... You know many tricks. You want to escape from me with these tricks”). Apparently, the father can see through her strategy, but he has not enough willpower or any effective counter-arguments to prevent her from carrying out her plan. When she suggests a temporary postponement (995–96), combined with a specific promise to agree completely to his request at a later point in time—“... Ich tun binamen, swaz du wil...” (995)—he tepidly protests, trying to insist on having sexual intercourse immediately without any delay (998–99). Nevertheless, she assures him that everything would work out much better for both of them if he were to grant her some time: “... ich will dines fügen vil paß, / vnd mag dir das vil lieb sein, / geschicht es mit dem willen mein...” (1008–10; “I will follow your wishes fully, and it will be very pleasant for you if it happens with my full consent...”).

³⁶ This self-defensive strategy finds parallels in other medieval narratives, such as in the twenty-fourth novella in *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* from ca. 1456 to 1467. Here, the rape victim also consents finally to his sexual demands, but requests that he allow her to help him out of his boots so as not to get soiled by them. But his boots sit very tightly, and once she has pulled down one of them half way, she simply drops his leg and runs away. Unable to follow her because of the situation with the boot, the perpetrator has to abandon his plans and returns to his friends, filled with rage. The narrator, however, emphasizes that Count Walerant later changed his mind, helped the young woman to find a good marriage partner, and provided her with a solid dowry because he had realized the degree to which she commanded a free spirit and loyalty.

As the narrator emphasizes, God is assisting her in this situation to find the right words and to maintain her friendly countenance (1001–06). And indeed, finally Beafloer's father mellows down and accedes to her proposal because her sweet words achieve the desired goal. He even expresses his astonishment about the power of her speech that has removed all his immediate desire to get his sexual wishes fulfilled. Although she is still a child, as he comments, her words have deeply affected him, so all he wants now is only to find out how she intends to realize their plan with which to achieve their mutual goal of sleeping with each other without anyone finding it out: "' . . . Liebe tochter, nu sag an, / das solltu mich wissen lan, / wie du es wilt fügen paß, d[a]z sag'" (1021–23; "' . . . Dear daughter, now tell me, let me know how you want to arrange it better, speak up"). Amazingly enough, this older man asks this young woman for advice on how to commit a sexual crime, not realizing how much he has already been caught in her web of words with which she knows how to blindfold him, metaphorically speaking.³⁷

Beafloer convincingly maintains the new role that she is playing, suggesting a specific date, a fortnight later, when they should get together again and then enjoy each other's body, but then much better prepared. Moreover, she urges her father not to linger and to rush to her as soon as he would have received her message (1026–28), in the manner in which lovers normally communicate in courtly romances. If we can trust the subsequent text passage, which seems slightly out of sequence, the emperor voices doubt about her sincerity once again: "' . . . du willst leicht vmbfueren mich'" (1030; "' . . . you might easily mislead me").³⁸ Consequently, after having agreed, though grudgingly, and realizing that she has actually talked him out of his sexual passion, the emperor demands an oath from her, to which she agrees happily, offering even two or three oaths (1042–44). But in secret she appeals to God not to mistake her true intentions: "'Got herre, mein andacht vernim'" (1048; Lord God, witness my devotion). The oath actually achieves its desired goal as her father finally lets her go and responds to her pleading to open the door and to leave the room.³⁹

For Beafloer seeing her father outside of her room proves to be like the liberation a bird would experience once freed from its cage (1066–71). However, as the narrator comments most insightfully, the psychological trauma almost makes her faint, now that the immediate danger is over. Deep pain fills her heart, and she almost collapses under the weight of the enormous emotional stress: "Ir ward vor

³⁷ See the various contributions to the volume *Words of Love*, 2008.

³⁸ In their online edition, Kiening and Katharina Mertens Fleury offer practically the same text, and they do not offer any comment on the authenticity of this passage.

³⁹ In essence the same approach is utilized by Isolde in Gottfried von Strasbourg's *Tristan* when she swears, shortly before the ordeal scene, that she has never laid in any other man's arms than her husband's and the poor pilgrim's, who is, of course, Tristan in disguise.

laid also we, / das sy vil kome gestuond" (1078–79; pain infused her so intensively that she could hardly stand upright), a clear signal by the narrator to what extent rape was regarded as a most traumatic experience for women. Although her father had not managed to rape her, she still undergoes the greatest psychological stress and deeply shudders at the thought of what would have happened if she had not managed to convince her father of the veracity of her deceptive words.

Subsequently Beafloer turns to prayers, but she also reflects upon the consequences and the imminent danger for her once the two weeks will have passed. Similar to the rape victims in the various *Apollonius* versions, she therefore decides to commit suicide (1093), yet she does not proceed because she fears for her soul (1117), an important sign for how much the narrative is determined by religious consideration. God is ever present here and guides the female protagonist through all dangers and threats and ultimately allows her to overcome even an assassination attempt and the continued risk that her father might want to rape her.

Nevertheless, Beafloer falls into despair, crying and praying the whole time without daring to reveal the terrible truth about the emperor's criminal intent to her foster-parents. Even when she is seated at the dinner table with Roboal and Benigna she cannot suppress her tears, which makes it impossible for her to eat: "Also lebet sy drey tag, / das sy aß noch tranck" (1168–69; Thus she lived for three days without eating or drinking).

But Beafloer does not suffer from helplessness, particularly not in this situation, and once she has revealed everything to these two loyal people, she also shares with them her plan to depart secretly from Rome in a boat.⁴⁰ This finds general approval, and Benigna even manages to convince her foster-daughter to eat again and thus to recover her strength. Once she has left Rome, the threat of rape disappears in the background, whereas new types of criminal behavior begin to emerge endangering this young woman once again.

We can break off here and reflect one more time on the attempted rape because the plot from then on turns in a very different direction and has nothing to do with sexual violation. Nevertheless, we still need to keep in mind that Beafloer's entire life both in Greece and then again in Italy after her return is determined by the constant fear of her father and his desire to rape her. For instance, when she reaches the Italian shore and is greeted by Roboal and Benigna, who happen to be at the coast that very moment, she inquires fearfully: "... Sag an, lebt noch min

⁴⁰ Later, when she is supposed to be executed as ordered in the letter falsified by her mother-in-law, the same situation emerges, with everyone around her despairing, whereas she calculates rationally and proceeds with concrete plans to escape. In other words, the narrator here presents an amazingly resolute, intelligent, rational, and controlled young woman who knows how to steer her own life even in face of gravest dangers.

herre? / Wan sult dir [ir] mich beborn, / so wil ich wider hinne varn . . .” (7271–73; “. . . Tell me, does my lord [father] still live? If you cannot protect me [from him], I want to leave again from here).

In contrast to all other rape stories discussed so far, here Beafloer conceives of a successful rescue strategy and can convince her father of the sincerity of her own words, that is, that she also wants to sleep with her father and is most anxious to experience sexuality with him, but that this has to happen in greatest secrecy and be well planned. She finds enough strength to laugh and to pretend that she is quite relaxed and does no longer feel disturbed by her father’s attempt to rape her, which finds an interesting parallel in the twenty-fourth tale in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.⁴¹ As the narrator emphasizes, God assists her to find the right words in this extremely dangerous situation to play a most clever game and to speak to her father in such a way that he finally believes her and lets his sexual desire fade away. Interestingly, at first she had only referred to ethical, religious, and political concerns that should hold him back from committing this crime. That is, she had not yet turned to God for his help, so her rhetorical skills fail to achieve the desired goal. But once Beafloer has called out to God directly, she finds the necessary strength to act the role of the willing mistress and to defuse her father’s suspicion. Moreover, with her skillful arguments she can lower, if not pause and block, her father’s libido and thus gain the needed respite. In fact, he subsequently leaves her unharmed, though he assumes that within two weeks he would be able to sleep with her (still rape her) after all, but then, as he now believes, with much less resistance on her part.

The narrator powerfully illustrates the enormous emotional strain on Beafloer both during the dangerous situation in her bedroom with her father, and in the following days. Her fear and terror do not abate, and if she had not been such a devout Christian, she would have killed herself. Very similar to other medieval narratives, the young woman then runs away, such as in *Ystoria Regis Franchorum* and *Yde et Olive*. In *Lion de Bourges* a squire accompanies the female protagonist, and in the *Comedia sine nomine* the nurse stays with her for a long time.⁴² Curiously, however, in German literature we do not find a similar account again such as in *Mai und Beafloer*, particularly with such an eloquent female heroine who succeeds in talking the rapist father out of his immediate intentions and in convincing him to wait for two weeks until a better opportunity will arise.

Scholars have repeatedly referred to Jans Enikel’s tale of “Der König von Reussen,” contained in his *Weltchronik* (World Chronicle, late thirteenth century),

⁴¹ See the online version of the English translation by Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie*, 1899 [?], here cited from one of the databases online at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/onehundredmerrie18575gut/18575-8.txt> (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011).

⁴² Archibald, *Incest*, 2001, 167.

as one of those narratives that demonstrates a number of considerable parallels.⁴³ But Enikel only indicates that the king wants to marry his daughter and inquires with the pope whether he would grant his permission. Since the royal messengers bribe the pope, he does not object and agrees that the father may take his own daughter as wife. The latter, when she finally learns the truth about who her bridegroom is supposed to be, cuts off her hair, puts on an old dress, and scratches her whole face bloody. Her father, when he witnesses her horrible disfigurement, at first faints and then orders his daughter to be exiled. She is forced to enter a barrel which they then throw into the sea. The rest is history and does not need to be discussed further here.⁴⁴ What matters for us rests in the fact that the father intends to impose his will on his daughter and have carnal knowledge with her. Whereas Beaflo resorts to rhetorical strategies and knows how to deceive her father with her powerful and skillful words, in Enikel's account the poor princess can only destroy her own beauty and mutilate her face, whereupon she is exiled. At the end, however, just as in *Mai und Beaflo*r, the young woman is reunified with her husband, whereas her father repents his sinfulness and atones for his crime against his own daughter.

Both narrators explicitly condemn the crime of rape and express their great pity with the female victim. But instead of letting her suffer through the sexual violation without having any means at hand to fight against the rapist father, as in the *Apollonius* tradition, here the daughters find intriguing ways to defy the intended rape and incest. Beaflo demonstrates on many other occasions her outstanding intelligence and rhetorical skills, but her greatest triumph (over male society) comes at the moment when she faces the gravest threat with her father having already wrestled her down to the floor and being about to rape her brutally. As the author signals in that case, advanced education for young women could be of extraordinary use, such as to help her fight against her own victimization in the case of an attempted sexual crime. Moreover, a strong devotion to God would provide the best spiritual protection. Nevertheless, irrespective of how all this would have to be evaluated, whether the narrator here reveals signs of naiveté or not, he certainly demonstrated his considerable concern for young women's chastity and expressed his deep sympathy for those who could not defend themselves effectively enough. Of course, this does not say anything about his attitude about women's social position, or about the common relationship between the genders.

⁴³ See, for instance, Düwel, "Mai und Beaflo," 1997, 53–55.

⁴⁴ *Jansen Enikels Werke*, 1900, vv. 26677–7356. For Enikel, see Dunphy, *History as Literature*, 2003. See also his webpage at: <http://www.dunphy.de/ac/je/jehome.htm> (last accessed on Feb. 11, 2011).

However, the highly detailed and amazingly sensitive description of Beaflores feelings, her fear, her desperate attempts to hold off her father, and then her most impressive rhetorical skills and her inner strength to play the role of the willing mistress to deceive her father underscore the extent to which the danger of rape was of great concern for this writer, and many others in the late Middle Ages.

A final example, not really far removed from the *Apollonius* tradition, or the motif of the innocently accused queen, can be found in the fifteenth-century prose novel by the Countess Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken, *Königin Sibille*. The author can be counted among the most important late-medieval German women writers, considering that she published four major novels, *Loher und Maller* (before 1437), *Herpin* (ca. 1437), *Königin Sibille* (1437), and *Huge Scheppel* (also 1437). She was born in Vézélize sometime after 1393, as the daughter of Frederick V of Lorraine and Margarethe of Vaudémont-Joinville. In 1412 she married Count Philipp I of Nassau-Saarbrücken, with whom she had three children. After her husband's death in 1429, Elisabeth assumed the government of the territory until 1430, when she married Count Henry IV of Blamont, who died in 1441. Her son Johann III, born in 1423, assumed the earldom of Saarbrücken in 1442.

Elisabeth's four novels are, on the one hand, translations from the French into German, but they prove to be, on the other, independent works after all in their own terms, despite numerous similarities. As I argued some time ago, "Elisabeth's novels describe the rise and fall of the Carolingian dynasty between the eighth and the tenth centuries, although they rely much more on medieval legend than on historic fact; they also include references to nobility from the Saarbrücken area."⁴⁵ The narrative follows the life of the innocently accused queen Sibille, whose husband, Emperor Charlemagne, erroneously, though grotesquely, believes that she had slept with a diabolic dwarf behind his back while the husband spent time at mass, which is, of course, not true at all. But the circumstances indicate the opposite, so Sibille, though pregnant with Charlemagne's son, is first threatened with being burned at the stake, and then, having been spared this execution, is expelled from the court and the country. She tries to find her way home to her father, the Emperor of Constantinople, which she ultimately manages to do with the help of various people of lower social status (a peasant, an inn-keeper, a thief, etc.). She delivers her son, raises him successfully, and finally a near war breaks out between Charlemagne, on the one hand, and his wife, her father, the pope, her son, and many friends, on the other.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Classen, "Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken," 1997, 43.

⁴⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of the historical and literary-historical context and background, including a review of the relevant research literature, see the contributions to *Zwischen Deutschland*

Neither Elisabeth nor any of the more or less contemporary writers in Europe who developed this theme in their own languages created their works based on a personal experience; after all, we are dealing with a fictional account that is only seemingly framed by historical references. More than that, however, the basic motif can be traced back to the early Middle Ages. In the first half of the thirteenth century Monk Alberic of Trois-Fontaines related in his *Chronica Alberici Monachi Trium Fontium* (begun in 1232) an account composed in 770 C.E. by a monk which contained a narrative about Charlemagne's wives. This account also contained the report about Queen Sibille, who was, according to Alberic, the daughter of Desiderius, king of the Langobards. Next to this original narrative, a version in Alexandrine verse, a fragmentary version has come down to us, identified as *Macaire*, so named after one of the evil figures in the text. The *chanson de geste* that grew out of these early accounts seems to have been very popular in France during the late Middle Ages (fourteenth century, especially, three groups of fragments still extant, one from Anglo-Norman England, one from the northeast of France, and one from the southeast of France).

In the early fourteenth century a German goliard, Schondoch, composed his own version, *Diu Künigin von Frankrich und der ungetriuwe marschalk*.⁴⁷ In Italy the account spread under the title *Storie Nerbonesi*, whereas in Spain, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, first prose versions, known as *Cuentos*, were disseminated. Apart from Elisabeth's prose text, a French compiler created a prose version around 1450, included in the prose cycle dealing with Garin de Monglane. Before him, Jean des Preis dit d'Outremeuse (1338–1400) from Lüttich had done the same in his chronicle *Ly Myreur des Histors*.⁴⁸

Here I want to concentrate on two major scenes early in the novel by Countess Elisabeth, both determined by men who are bent on having their will with the queen, hence want to rape her. However, the term 'rape' would first need further definition because the queen does not have to suffer from sexual violence in the specific sense of the word and knows how to defend herself effectively, and later she is pursued by a rapist but she can escape in time. But both episodes imply that the queen is subjected to most dangerous rape attempts. For us it does not matter whether the sexual crime actually happens, or whether the author only describes the circumstances that could lead to rape, such as in the case of *Mai und Beaflo*r. Moreover, it does not concern us here to what extent Elisabeth drew from the various sources because her novel represents a fictional account that obviously addresses a profound problem commonly faced by women, especially in the

und Frankreich, 2002.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Liepe, *Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken*, 1920, 181–88; Jefferis, "Das Bildprogramm," 2004, 111–32.

⁴⁸ *Der Roman von der Königin Sibille*, 1977, 9–14.

highest rank of society, since otherwise this novel would not have been copied and translated so many times since the high Middle Ages, whether we think of the Crescentia motif, or that of Helena, Genoveva, and other innocently persecuted women/queens.⁴⁹

The queen is not raped at her husband's court, but the black dwarf who suddenly appears there and is warmly, though rather foolishly, greeted by the emperor quickly falls in love with Sibille and tries to find a way into her bed without asking for her approval. He is almost delirious when he observes the queen, but he does not inquire at all what her wishes might be or how she might feel about him; instead he only comments on his own sexual desires: "Ach herre got von hymelrich wie selig were der man / der mit der koniginne synen willen mochte gehan / dann sij ist die schoneste / die vff ertrich gesin mag" (120–21; oh Lord God in heaven, how blessed would be the man who could have his will with the queen since she is the most beautiful [woman] here on earth). Not caring about any dangers that might result from his action, the dwarf silently enters the queen's bedroom and gazes at her filled with sexual passion.⁵⁰ But when she awakes and realizes his presence with no one else around, she gets worried and so angry that she hits him in his face with her fist knocking out three teeth. He had been so bold as to ask her directly for her sexual favors: "Lyebe ffrouwe sprach der getwerg / jr lassent mich dan bij üch slaffen vnd nement mich nackent in uwer arme / so müß ich sterben" (121; Dear Lady, if you do not allow me to sleep with you and to take me naked into your arms, I will have to die). Although he does not have the physical strength to force her, the situation is most compromising, for her as well, and she would have beaten him up even further if he had not run away (121). Yet, having been so badly rejected and humiliated, he plans his revenge: "so wolde er es ir jndrencken" (121; he wanted to pay her back for that).

Most deviously, the dwarf does not reveal to the king what has happened to him, most visible by the missing teeth; instead he subsequently sneaks into the marital bedroom at night and hides behind the curtains, waiting for the hour when the king would get up at midnight to attend mass. Once the latter has left the room, the dwarf undresses and slips under the blankets, without being noticed by the sleeping queen. He does not dare to touch her, but he intends to rob her honor: "so wolde er doch die frouwe vmb yre ere brengen" (122; he wanted to deprive

⁴⁹ Liepe, *Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken*, 1920, 177–81. For further details about the individual motifs, see Frenzel, *Stoffe*, 1992, 141–44 ("Crescentia"), 250–52 ("Genoveva"), 315–20 ("Helena").

⁵⁰ The male gaze has repeatedly been identified as a powerful tool for sexual conquest and proves to be a significant component in human interaction, often associated with repression and subjugation, and this also in other periods than the Middle Ages; see, e.g., *Schaulust*, 2005; Sumi and Clüver, "Body, Voice and Gaze", 2006, 194–218; Reed, *Virgil's Gaze*, 2007. Of course, women can also gaze, and pursue similar strategies, but in our context we might claim that male gaze tends to pave the way for rape, if the latter is intended.

her of her honor). In other words, he wants to rape her in a proxy fashion, knowing only too well that he can never achieve his concrete sexual goal with her and hence wants her to suffer instead, skillfully relying on stereotypical and widespread misogyny determining the husband and other men at court. Indeed, as soon as the king has returned and discovered the naked dwarf, he begins to cry heavily, immediately assuming the worst, cursing all women for their disloyalty and alleged nymphomania: “Got wolle yme verfluchen / der vmmer me frouwen getrüwet / dan die frouwe hat mich betrogen” (122; May God curse him who ever trusts women since this woman has cheated on me).

Tragically, she does not even know of the dwarf who is still sleeping next to her, yet the king quickly draws his wrong conclusions and assumes that she indeed has committed adultery with this creature, although everyone is in agreement as to his utmost ugliness and repulsiveness, as the narrator had commented upon the dwarf’s original arrival at court: “Alle die yne an gesahen / die meynten es were der duffel” (120; All you saw him thought that he was the devil). The dwarf had carefully strategized his response to the king who cannot believe in his utter dismay—hence probably also in his inferiority complex and fear of his own sexual impotence—that his beautiful wife could have slept with such a monster.⁵¹ Now his time has come and he defends himself deviously, claiming that the queen herself had initiated this tryst, against his own will: “die dorecht frouwe drug mich selber jn yre bette” (123; the foolish woman carried me herself into her bed). As much as the queen then tries to defend herself, pointing out that she is very much pregnant, hence would not even have thought the slightest about committing adultery with any man, not to speak of the dwarf, and suggesting that the king should burn her at the stake if the opposite would have been the case, none of her arguments in her own defense have any effect on her husband (123), who actually picks up her own proposal and condemns her to be dragged and then burned alive (123).

Although she insists on her complete innocence, for the king the presence of the naked dwarf in the marital bed is enough evidence and thwarts all her attempts to come up with any counter-argument. The subsequent events strongly emphasize the real problem at Charlemagne’s court where evil counselors plot not only to kill the queen, but also to undermine the king’s honor and ultimately to dethrone him. Hence, for them the charge of adultery against the queen proves to

⁵¹ For a change in the mentality regarding dwarfs in the late Middle Ages, see Classen, “Außenseiter,” 1999, 351–66. It is most fitting in cultural-historical terms that the black dwarf in Elisabeth’s novel is characterized almost like a devil, entirely bent on causing destruction and pursuing only his own desires irrespective of the consequences for other people. See also Lecouteux, *Les Nains*, 1988; Battles, “Dwarfs in Germanic Literature,” 2005, 29–82; Habicht, *Der Zwerg als Träger metafiktionaler Diskurse*, 2010, 163–73. Curiously, Habicht never mentions Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken as the author of the German version.

be a most convenient opportunity to undermine and to destroy the king's happiness, public respect, and also power base (Sibille is, after all, the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople!) The ordinary people, who are about to witness the impending fiery execution scream and cry on the queen's behalf, but they don't have any power and cannot change the king's heart or mind. Only when a small group of influential members of the royal council gets together and appeals to Charlemagne to transform the penalty from burning at the stake to banishment from the country, is the queen's life ultimately spared.⁵² However, the dwarf is thrown into the fire, although he had repeated his accusation against the queen, pointing out his own physical weakness, and her active role in this tryst: "Herre ich bin eyne lame weych mensch vnd ich enkunde mich ir nit erweren" (126; Lord, I am a lame, weak person, and I could not defend myself against her).

Although the queen's life is spared for the moment, her suffering will not be over for a very long time, in fact, for decades to come. The further details, however, do not concern us here; only one more scene deserves to be considered specifically because it involves a second attempt to rape her. Shortly after having left the court, accompanied by the worthy knight Abrye von Mondidyre, another knight, Mayrkar, decides to follow the two and to have his will with the pregnant woman: "er wolde der konnigynne nochryden / vnd wolde synen willen mit ir dun" (128; he wanted to ride after the queen and have his wish with her). As soon as he has found them in the wilderness, he orders Abrye to stay aside and to let him rape the queen: "Jch wil mynen willen mit jr dun" (128; I want to have my will with her). As an explicit sign of Abrye's great honor, he adamantly refuses to let this happen and fights against his opponent with all his might although he is not properly armored and hence soon meets his death. Mayrkar then decapitates Abrye's horse, and would have done the same to his dog if the animal did not escape from him. In fact, this dog will later reveal Mayrkar's murder and fight against him in an ordeal, thereby expressing his great love for his dead master.⁵³

Next Mayrkar attempts to find the queen, who has fled in the meantime, but he has no luck, which also means that her life is spared. After all, as the narrator comments: "Er hat gantzen willen hette er die konnigynnen fünden / so wolde er synen willen mit ir gedan han // vnd wolde dan darnach ir heubt han abegeslagen / Aber gode wolde sye behuden / er en künde sye nirgen finden" (129; He was firmly decided that, if he had found the queen, he would have raped her, and then he would have cut off her head. But God wanted to protect her, so he could not find her anywhere). Furiously, Mayrkar returns to Charlemagne's court, whereas the queen rides all night through the forest, always afraid that the murderer would catch up with her and rape her. The story continues from here, first focusing on

⁵² Burchert, *Die Anfänge*, 1987, 97–98.

⁵³ Classen, "Dogs as Messengers," 2007, 67–86.

the almost proverbial loyalty of the dog to his dead master, then on the queen's subsequent life, at the end leading to the reunification of husband and wife and the punishment of the evil counselors who are hanged at the gallows (172–73). Finally, the danger of rape is contained, and the queen can happily enjoy her marital life with the king.

Undoubtedly, the entire novel is in part predicated on the problem of sexual perpetration and men's constant attempts to abuse the beautiful woman who does not enjoy the protection of her family because she has married the Carolingian king Charlemagne, far away from her home, Constantinople. Even her own husband cares surprisingly little, despite his many expressions of emotional distress and despair, and simply assumes the worst when he discovers the dwarf in the bed. The latter easily manages to convince the king that sexual intercourse has happened because the dwarf is naked, lying next to his own wife. Her defense fails despite most convincing arguments (pregnancy, her love for the king, the dwarf's ugliness, etc.), apparently because of the king's lack of reason, his great jealousy, and probably also because of his sense of masculine inferiority and personal insecurity. Worst of all, he is surrounded by evil-minded advisors who eagerly use the dwarf to promote their malicious plans to destroy the queen, and hence also the king. The narrator identifies them as "verreder" (126; traitors) who soon enough use the opportunity to malign the queen with the help of the dwarf: "die gingen zu dem getwerg vnd sprachen zü yme / Sage faste widder die konnigynne / das man sye verborne / so wollen wir dir mit golde vnd silber da von helffen / das dir nit sol werren" (126; they went to the dwarf and said to him: "Testify firmly against the queen so that she will be burnt. We will help you with gold and silver to get away safely").⁵⁴

Unfortunately for the dwarf, their promise does not hold true, and the dwarf suffers the just punishment for his lying, though without the king having realized the falsity of his testimony. Moreover, as Mayrkar's behavior indicates, the men at Charlemagne's court have no respect for the queen or for women in general, insofar as he disregards all morality and honor and viciously pursues the queen when she is at her weakest, only accompanied by Abrye, intent on raping and then murdering her.

Although Elisabeth drew from a very old source, more or less translating it into Early New High German, she demonstrated her great concern with women's well-being during her own time and used the narrative framework to alert her audience to the grave danger that women can face if they are maligned in public and subject to male machinations. Moreover, as *Königin Sibille* powerfully illustrates once again, the topic of rape was apparently very much on people's minds, whether

⁵⁴ Burchert, *Die Anfänge*, 1987, 94–98.

there was a high crime rate involving women as victims or not, during the late Middle Ages.⁵⁵

As our previous examples have shown, the motif of rape was readily available in ancient literary works and continued to attract authors' and readers'/listeners' attention throughout time, probably both because of the esteem that the ancient-classical and medieval sources enjoyed even in the late Middle Ages, and because these provided convenient literary material to discuss contemporary issues, such as rape.⁵⁶ Surprisingly, modern research on Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken has examined many different aspects in her work, and so in *Königin Sibille*,⁵⁷ but the woman's suffering and the particular threat of being raped has not been the center of attention. But we need to keep in mind that here a female author thematizes a female protagonist who is badly harassed by the dwarf, then is, at least metaphorically speaking, 'raped' by her husband who rather trusts the words of an ugly and black dwarf than the pleading of his own wife who is pregnant with his child and who would be willing to have herself burnt at the stake if she were lying. Finally, she would almost have been raped by the evil knight Mayrkar if she had not escaped from him in time. Later encounters with other men, including the good guide Warakir, regularly awake the same sexual desires in them, though then moral and ethical considerations enter the picture. Warakir comments, when he casts his eyes for the first time on the queen: "jch han hie eyn abentüre fünden mit der sal ich mich ergetzen" (130; here I have come across an adventure/victim, with whom I will have my pleasure). And the captain of the robbers who not much later meets the female protagonist and her new companion, immediately decides to have her gang-raped: "Sy sol noch hint an myme arme lygen / vnd wan sie dan eyn nacht by mir geslefft / so wil ich sie üch die ander nacht vorbas lassen / das ir dan ouch bij jr slaffent" (146; She will lie in my arms still today, and once she has lied with me for one night, I will gladly let you have her for the other night so that you can sleep with her as well).⁵⁸ However, at the end Queen Sibille triumphs, despite numerous challenges, and she can even convince her husband of her original innocence. Charlemagne actually bears the most guilt for her suffering because he would almost have executed her, then he exiled her, without

⁵⁵ See Heiduk, "Die Diskussion, 1997, 9–109, though without any consideration of sexual crimes. Regarding the public discourse on what constituted sexual sins, or illicit sex, as reflected in late-medieval court proceedings, see Burghartz, *Zeiten der Reinheit*, 1999, 90–96.

⁵⁶ Doblhofer, *Vergewaltigung*, 1994; Swärdh, *Rape*, 2003; see also the contributions to *Unzucht – Notzucht*, 2003.

⁵⁷ Burchert, *Die Anfänge*, 1987, emphasizes, above all, the conflict between the councillors and Charlemagne, 94–96.

⁵⁸ This is exactly the same kind of thinking characterizing the robbers who want to attack Erec and his wife Enite in Hartmann von Aue's eponymous romance; see the previous chapter.

providing her with the necessary protection despite being pregnant with his child, and he refused for a long time to welcome her back and to believe that he was wrong in his stubborn misogynist attitude. We can easily perceive how much the female author intended not only to entertain, but also to teach her audience, that is, husbands to abstain from such evil and vicious behavior and thinking, and wives to stay alert and protect their honor and morality.

In light of these many literary examples, from the various versions of *Apollonius* to the anonymous *Mai und Beaflor*, finally to Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken's *Königin Sibille*, we can safely conclude that late-medieval German composers/writers fully grasped the dramatic and politically sensitive issue of rape and illustrated the devastating consequences of this sexual crime not only for the female victim, but also, depending on the context, for the married couple, and ultimately for society and the country. The rape of a woman thus emerges as a powerful metaphorical expression of the rape of an entire people, its values, morals, and ethics. Significantly, the criticism voiced here addresses not only the evil dwarf, but also the naive, volatile, irrational, suspicious, and jealous husband, then the treacherous counselors, and the rapist knight Mayrkar. In other words, the queen's danger of being innocently executed or of being raped has considerable political implications serving as warning signals of the general malaise of the public life where such denunciations and attempted rapes can happen easily.

Although Elisabeth drew from early medieval sources for her account, she obviously intended to create a literary work which could serve as a mirror for her society, warning that abusing and raping a woman could have many unforeseen consequences, particularly if such crimes could occur without a strong justice system getting involved in a timely fashion and protecting the innocent victim.

There is no doubt that she intended to provide rich and lively entertainment for her audience,⁵⁹ but she also poignantly underscored the grave risks for women to be raped if they did not find sufficient protection within the family, by their husbands, or male relatives. Elisabeth's heroine undergoes many trials and tribulations in her life because multiple times various men try to have their will with the queen. Rape is the name of their game.⁶⁰ But in the contemporary literary discourse strong voices (male and female) emerged that explicitly warned against that crime and insisted on women's right to be protected from this horrible transgression.

⁵⁹ Konczak, *Studien*, 1991, 19.

⁶⁰ von Bloh, *Ausgerenkte Ordnung*, 2002, 118, correctly observes, though without going into further details, "Es ist das sexuelle Begehren, dem die Protagonistin fortdauernd ausgesetzt ist" (The protagonist is continually exposed to sexual desire).

Chapter 9

Violence against Women in Late-Medieval Popular Song Poetry and Heroic-Epic Songs

Unfortunately, every text associated with ‘popular culture,’¹ however we might want to define it, has previously tended to fall too easily into dubiously negative categories, casting it, for instances, as lacking in aesthetic quality, ethical and moral significance, or political and economic relevance.² Nevertheless, if we focus on the genre of songbooks, above all, we gain immediate access to literary (and musical) traditions that extend in part from the early and high Middle Ages to the sixteenth, seventeenth, and sometimes even the eighteenth century.³ The epithet ‘popular’ owes its negative connotation to the fact that increasingly poets originated from many different social classes, though it would be highly problematic to separate those sophisticated, truly ‘literary’ texts from those that would not deserve to be identified as such.⁴ Subsequently, I will investigate a few popular songs, traditionally not associated with the aristocratic culture, in which women suffer from physical abuse, and even rape, but I will then conclude with a brief look at a rather unusual heroic-epic song contained in the *Dresden Manuscript*, entitled “Das Meerwunder,” where the entire text is predicated on a queen’s gruesome suffering from being raped and impregnated by a monster, not to mention scores of other women who later suffer an even worse fate at the hands of their rapists.⁵

In many songs contained in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century song collections (*Liederbücher*), we hear of various cases in which men abuse women physically and

¹ See the seminal study by Burke, *Popular Culture*, 2002; cf. also the contributions to *Literature and Popular Culture*, 2009.

² For an excellent and concise overview of how popular culture has been researched since the late eighteenth century until today, see Kaschuba, “Volkskultur,” 2003, 791–94.

³ Classen, *Deutsche Liederbücher*, 2001. See also the seminal study by Suppan, *Deutsches Liedleben*, 1973. For a recent analysis of a sub-genre, which has wider implications for the larger theme, see Kellermann, *Abschied*, 2000. The most comprehensive reference work remains the *Handbuch des Volksliedes*, 1973.

⁴ Schulz, “Volkslied,” Vol. III, 2003, 795–97.

⁵ See my anthology, *Deutsche Frauenlieder*, 1999.

psychologically, threaten to rape them, or commit that crime indeed. Because of the specific nature of this poetic genre, however, we have mostly to read between the lines, unveil the specific allusions, and identify the clues confirming that sexual violence has happened. In the *Ambraser Liederbuch* from 1578, 1584, and 1599, to mention some of the most important dates of printed versions, the song “ES war ein wacker megdlein wol gethan” (no. 89) deals with a young woman whom a knight takes to the forest and then abandons her there. All we learn, however, is that he did not observe the loyalty that he had sworn her: “die trewe die er dir gelobet, / die hielt er nicht” (7, 3–5). The poetic language hides more than it reveals, but in light of our previous investigations it seems most likely that the song alludes to a rape scene because of the reference to his breaking his oath, hence his committing a transgression, and this in the forest far away from society, almost the classical location where rape happens often.⁶

In “ES wolt ein medlein wasser holen” (no. 100) a knight meets a young woman at a fountain and asks her to be his mistress for a year. She agrees on the condition that he brings her three roses that have been picked in the same year. Because he cannot find any, he has an artist paint them for him, and thus he can force her to grant him his reward. Her protests are for naught, and the young man insists on their love-making, hence forces her to have sex with him, or rapes her. In “ICH weis mir ein hübsche gräserin” (no. 242) a peasant woman is attacked by a man while she is making hay (genre of the *pastourella*). Her efforts to defend herself with a branch of roses fail because it breaks and the knight throws her into the grass. Curiously, we then learn that she appeals to this “greise[n] man” (6, 1) not to touch her, otherwise she would die, and with this the song already comes to an end. What else would we have to conclude but that this is an old man who rapes this peasant girl?

In Hermann von Sachsenheim’s song “Vn der Gras Metzen” (II, no. 72), contained in the songbook by Clara Hätzlerin (1471), another old man woos a young peasant woman, but she rejects him because he is too ugly for her. When she mocks him, he touches her breasts, then throws her on the ground, and tries to rape her, but he fails at the end because of his physical impotence. In Ludwig Iselin’s songbook, concluded in 1575, we come across a most interesting example with the song “Eins morgens fruo dett jch mich zuo” (no. 88). Here a man reports how he seduced a housemaid and went to bed with her. But already in the second stanza we learn that she fights him off and threatens to scream for help from the lady. Then, however, things calm down again, and the man seems to have achieved his sexual goal because the last stanzas only state that the bed was

⁶ The topical nature of this location and its association with sexual violence finds confirmation in many texts throughout the centuries, from Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* to some of the *Schwänke*; see the respective chapters in this book.

rearranged and that both promised to meet again the next day. This song clearly indicates, first, that rape was common even within, or especially in, the house where the lord rapes the female servants; second, that a woman's resistance against sexual violence was regarded as nothing but a playful female strategy; and third, that we here face something like 'date rape,' although the poets commonly try their best to hide the violent nature of the sexual encounter and operate on a facetious level.⁷

This list of popular songs referring more or less explicitly to violence and rape could be extended extensively, but suffice it to conclude that even some of the most entertaining late-medieval texts, specifically those appealing to broader, popular, tastes, include rather critical comments about the dangers of sexual violence and state the facts relatively clearly. But the male perspective dominates almost completely because there is hardly any sense of reprehension and moral opprobrium, not to speak of the legal perpetration committed by the rapists.

To round off this chapter and to return to the same chronological time frame that defines the earlier popular songs, let us also turn to a most curious, heretofore mostly ignored heroic-epic song from the late fifteenth century, "Das Meerwunder." This song, consisting of thirty-one stanzas, was first copied down in the *Dresden Heldenbuch* from 1472 (today housed in Dresden, Landesbibliothek, Mscr. Dresd. M. 201).⁸ The sixteenth-century Nuremberg cobbler poet Hans Sachs picked up the motif and created two further versions, "Ein Meisterlied" (1552) and "Historia: Königin Deudalinda mit dem meerwunder" (1562).⁹ In the Dresden manuscript, a queen goes for a walk near the sea, when a monster emerges from the water, characterized by its bat feet, hirsute appearance, eagle eyes, a frog-like mouth, and a long beard. The monster throws himself upon the queen and rapes her, but then a nobleman arrives and chases the wild creature away. Upon the knight's advice the sexual crime is kept a secret, though she soon enough proves to be pregnant. The boy whom she later delivers has black hair all over his body and red eyes. At the age of twelve he has gained so much strength that no one can resist him. He rapes virgins and devours them afterwards, and when the king admonishes him, the young man begins to attack his 'father' and 'brother' with

⁷ For a comprehensive survey, see Classen, *Deutsche Liederbücher*, 2001, Index, 334 ("Vergewaltigung").

⁸ Here I use the edition in *Der Helden Buch*, 1825, 222–26; see also the digitized version of the ms. at: <http://digital.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/werkansicht/274282186/196/> (last accessed on Feb. 11, 2011). Kaspar von der Rhön (from Münnernstadt) and one or two other scribes created this huge collection for Duke Balthasar of Mecklenburg (1442–1507), but the "Meerwunder" was apparently not copied down by Kaspar. See Heinze, "Heldenbücher," 1981, 949–51.

⁹ For a good summary of the older editions, the content of the epic poem, and of the relevant research literature, see Haug, "Das Meerwunder," 1987, 293–97. See now Voorwinden, "Das Meerwunder," 2005, 161–82.

murderous intent. No knight can achieve anything against him, and he kills anyone who dares to challenge him. This forces the king to flee with his family into a strong castle, but the monster follows them, crashes through the gate and tries to attack them. Finally, the queen shoots arrows at him until he dies.

Only now does the queen confess, upon her husband's inquiry, what had happened to her a long time ago, and the king pardons her, although he asks her to return to the sea to help him to catch the rapist monster. She willingly complies with this request, and when the creature emerges from the water, father and son capture it, which allows the queen to stab it to death with her own hands, using her husband's sword, explicitly emphasizing how much joy she has with this revenge, thereby reversing the phallic attack with the appropriate tool, penetrating its body and killing it in cold blood.

The poem concludes with the king husband commenting on the happy outcome, warning his wife, however, no longer to walk alone near the sea to avoid further dangers. The narrator, however, offers the final, somewhat curious advice that a rape victim like the queen should keep quiet to preserve her honor: "das man in solchen (dingen) sei / verschwigen vnd getrewe" (31, 7–8; be secretive and loyal in such matter). Those who openly discuss rape would lose their reputation "wan es ist der welt sit also, / das mancher hie auf erden ist des seinen nechsten vngluck(s) fro" (31, 11–12; it is the custom in the world that so many a person feels happy about the neighbor's misfortune).

In the initial stanza the narrator characterizes the sea monster as thoroughly evil-minded, constantly bent on robbing honorable women's virginity and hurting their chastity, not to mention his cannibalistic method to get rid of his victims afterwards: "die schwecht er vnd sie darnach fras" (1, 12; he raped them first and then he devoured them). Fortunately for the queen, an Italian knight ("ein here von Lampart," 8, 2) rescues her in the last minute, though she has already been impregnated and will have to give life to the monster's son, who in turn will prove to be a terrifyingly close match to his father, soon enough committing the same crimes as his biological father, ultimately turning even against his own family. This forces the mother to kill her ill-conceived offspring with her own hand because this seems to be the only possibility to stop his untamable violence, both sexual and murderous.¹⁰ Raping women, hence, proves to be, at least for this poet, only

¹⁰ Perhaps there might be an uncanny parallel to an earlier text where a son also has to be killed in order to avoid future catastrophes. In Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine* (1456), based on the French version in verse by Couldrette (shortly after 1400), the fairy woman Melusine is twice betrayed by her husband who made her true nature public although he had sworn not to investigate her whereabouts on Saturdays and hence also not to say anything about his wife to anyone. When she has to leave Reymund and all her children, she admonishes him: "Horribel unser Juengster Sohn / der drey Augen in die Welt hat bracht / den soltu nicht lebendig lassen / und von stundan nach meinem hinscheiden toedten und verderben" (88; You must not allow to

the first stage in a whole process of escalating violence directed at society at large—tragically an experience women have often gone through in war situations, both in the past and today.

As this poem also indicates, this violence is mostly located in the heart of the community, which makes it so difficult to localize and to eliminate it. The discussion of the young man's indiscriminate raping and devouring of women serves not to address sexual violence per se, but much more so the devastating consequences of rape for society at large. When the young man rapes all these women, he does not even seem to be looking for any sexual pleasures. Instead, his interest is focused on his own family which he really hopes to destroy altogether: "er wolt den kungk vertreiben von seinen landen mit gewalt" (14, 12; he wanted to expel the king from his country with force). In other words, here we come across another example of what the theme of 'rape' really tells us about society at large. Many young women disappear, having been raped and then eaten up by the young monster (13).

The king severely chastises his ferocious son, pointing out that he would not rape women if he were truly of noble character and noble parents, hence rejects him as a family member (16, 4–8). Significantly, even the best knights in the kingdom achieve nothing against this monster and are actually killed by him, so everyone begins to flee, incapable of coping with this challenge (21). The rapist has turned into a menace for the entire country, and the crime of rape thus emerges as a catastrophic catalyst to bring about the total destruction of the kingdom. However, at the end father and his real son fight together against the monster, boldly supported by the mother who finishes him off with her arrows, a most appropriate method to compensate for her rape by the biological father. Fortunately, finally the creature succumbs to his many wounds and massive loss of blood: "Die muter vil pfeil in in schos, / vnd das vil plutes aus ym flos, / das es schwam auf dem salle" (24, 1–3; the mother shot many arrows into him, making him bleed profusely. Much blood flowed in the hall).

live our youngest son Horribel who was born with three eyes; you must kill him right after my departure). If Horribel were to live, he would bring disaster upon the country: "so moecht in dem gantzen Landt zu Potiers vor grossem Krieg / der da wuerd / kein Korn oder ander Fruecht mehr wachsen / denn er wuerde es gantz und gar verwuesten / und seine Brueder wuerde er alle bringen in ein grosse armut / und alle seine Freund / die seines Geschlechts seyn / wuerde er alle verderben und verheeren" (ibid.; then no more wheat or any other fruit would grow in the entire country of Poitiers because of the big war; it would be entirely destroyed. And all his brothers he would throw into great poverty, and all his friends who belong to his kin he would destroy and decimate). Certainly, there is no specific reference to rape, but the degree of violence seems to be the same, committed by a member of the own clan. In "Das Meerwunder" rape proves to be only the first stage of violence, and it is soon replaced by many other types of aggression and destruction. Thüring von Ringoltingen, *Melusine*, 1969.

Subsequently the king inquires with his wife whether she might have committed adultery, otherwise he would not be able to understand the origin of this monster son. Being forced to tell the truth, and also relieved that the horror regime has ended, she explains it with an explicit reference to her having been raped: “do fing mich also graussamlich / ein scheuchssliches merwunder, / vnd das det ser betzwingen mich” (25, 11–13; a horrible, disgusting sea creature caught me and forced himself upon me). Knowing that she had been victimized, the husband forgives her having brought to life this terrifying creature whom they just have killed: “das sol euch gar vergeben sein, / seit ir sein wurt betzungen” (26, 2–3; I forgive you this because you had been forced). Moreover, they subsequently capture the sea monster, and this gives the wife a chance to revenge her long-felt suffering and thus to protect other women from being raped in the future (29).

Nevertheless, as the narrator indicates in the epimythion, rape was regarded as shameful, and the victim was advised to stay quiet in order to avoid evil rumors to spread everywhere (31), which seems a far cry from the literary treatment of this crime elsewhere, as we have seen already many times.

As the rather diverse examples in this chapter have demonstrated, women’s suffering, either physical (beating) or sexual (rape) was of great concern also for more popular writers and poets, whether they targeted the problem seriously or facetiously. The large number of examples even among popular songs, and then in collections with heroic epics, indicates how much the topic itself raised concern and required public examination, which was perhaps done best via the literary discourse. Quite naturally, especially in the context of the patriarchal world of the late Middle Ages, many times rape and violence in their various manifestations are viewed through a comic lens, but this does not mean that those crimes were simply tolerated or ignored. As these literary and musical examples indicate, by contrast, the public discourse approached women’s mistreatment, particularly if done in such an egregious manner, rather critically and developed major opposition, as these popular songs, the heroic epic song, and the verse narrative reflect quite similarly, although they were created at different times and belong to somewhat different social contexts.

It would be a great loss finally not to refer to Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s (1740–1832) famous poem “Heidenröslein” as well which powerfully takes our observations regarding the treatment of rape in late-medieval and early-modern popular literature, especially in song poetry, to a new, almost dialectical level, somehow teasing new meaning out of those tantalizing allusions to sexual violence. Though first published in 1789, Goethe had composed it much earlier, apparently in 1771, based on a model that he had found in a poetry anthology by Paul von der Aelst, *Blumm und Außbund Alerhandt Außlerlesener Weltlicher, Züchtiger*

Lieder und Rheyen (Deventer 1602). His friend Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) owned a copy of that collection to which he had introduced Goethe, thus providing him with the model for his famous song “Heidenröslein,” an adaption of which he himself published already in 1773. Whereas we know nothing about early stages of Goethe’s poem, it is certain that Paul von der Aelst had drawn from an older poem in a Nuremberg song collection from 1586. This brings us to the immediate chronological proximity to some of the songs discussed in this chapter.

But the poem in von der Aelst’s songbook does not address rape at all, despite some vocabulary associated with picking roses: “Der die röslein wirt brechen ab, / Röslein auff der Heyden / daß wirt wol thun ein junger knab, / züchtig / fein bescheiden . . .” (He who will pick the little rose, the rose on the meadow, will be a young man, well mannered, fine, and humble).¹¹ After all, as the narrative voice emphasizes, once the rose will no longer return his love, he will simply depart: “So wil ich weichen in der still / vnd mich von jhr thun scheiden / So wil ich sie auch fahren lahn / vnd wil ein andere nemmen an (5, 3–6; I will move away quietly and leave her. I will let her go as well and choose another one).

Goethe, on the other hand, created a very different account of this unfortunate love affair. Here a young man discovers a rose early in the morning that mightily delights him. He tells her that he will pick her, uproot her, against which the rose protests energetically, warning him that she will poke his fingers. However, he does not care about her threats, picks the rose, disregarding all her laments, and the poem concludes with a brief statement that the rose had to suffer.¹²

Previous scholarship mostly held the opinion that here Goethe has cast a violent scenario in matters of love and sex, and cached the true tragedy, rape, through the employment of the words and sounds borrowed from older popular poetry, most beautifully captured through the famous refrain.¹³ The poem is clearly predicated on the experience of female suffering and male sexual force, irrespective of the use of the term “Knabe,” which could be translated as ‘male child,’ or rather as ‘young man.’ Max Kommerell had argued quite some time ago

¹¹ Quoted from Althaus, “Ursprung,” 1999, 170; Woesler, “Goethes Heidenröslein,” 2005, 195–208; see also Menzel, “Goethes ‘Heidenröslein,’” 1999, 44–47.

¹² Quoted from Goethe, *Der junge Goethe 1757–1775*, vol. I, 1985, 163–64; for a solid commentary, see *ibid.*, 836–38.

¹³ The important interpretations in that direction can be found well summarized in Woesler, “Goethes Heidenröslein,” 2005, 198–99, although he himself avers that the opposite is the case because Goethe here addresses the fragility of beauty, particularly in the natural world, and that those who pick a flower without taking care also to dig out all the roots will certainly kill it. As he sees it, Goethe tried to say that it would be better to leave the rose alone and to admire simply its beauty without destroying it. Pointing out Goethe’s own comments regarding his song as one for children, he tries to hide the actual textual statement and idealizes Goethe’s poem as an aesthetically most pleasing didactic and ethical message.

that the flower represents simple existence, whereas the young man stands for the sheer joy about beauty in nature. Consequently, he admonished us that the detection of an amorous element in the text would be entirely alien for Goethe's poem.¹⁴

It would take us too far afield to enter the huge area of Goethe philology, trying to untangle the most complex discourse on how to situate his "Heidenröslein" in the poet's philosophical and scientific thought patterns, as modern scholars have argued increasingly. We might have to concede that in some of the poems or epic poems discussed above similar aspects would have to be taken into consideration as well, especially because many times, and this also in verse (*mæren*) and short prose narratives (*Schwänke*) the theme of 'rape' often aims really at non-sexual matters, that is, especially at the conflict among men competing for social rank within their society. Nevertheless, Goethe, in his deliberate effort to revive the old tradition of folk songs, or popular songs, could not extricate himself as clearly as he might have intended from the quite common discourse on rape, which the adjective 'red' in the refrain and the use of the verb 'to break' (or 'to pick') unmistakably signal, not to mention the finite, tragic outcome—or is it really tragic?¹⁵

This is not to deny the aestheticizing dimension of this famous song, but those who insist that Goethe's text cannot be read in a feminist fashion also do a disservice to the close reading of any literary text where much too often sexual violence lurks ominously, and so here as well, even if the overarching theme aims for the exploration of quite different aspects. The rose will die after the young man has picked it (or her), and possibly he will remember this crime for the rest of his life because of the prick that she gave him in her feeble defense against this 'wild' person. Many times there is violence hidden even within some of the most beautiful love poetry, and to deny that subtly the theme of rape plays a significant role might well be tantamount to ideologizing Goethe's lyrics more than they deserve. Insofar as he made a serious effort to recover the ancient tradition of popular songs ("Volkslieder"), irrespective of the different intentions that he might have pursued with his "Heidenröslein," he could not help but to reflect, at least in some sense, on the issue of violence, if not rape, that surfaces here as well, irrespective of the playful and happy tone of voice. The evidence consists of her protests against his effort to pick her, her refusal to accept his wooing, and his reckless approach, destroying the idyllic setting. A dream is destroyed.

¹⁴ Kommerell, *Gedanken*, 1985, 329–30.

¹⁵ Althaus, "Ursprung," 1999, 183.

Chapter 10

The Critical Treatment of Rape in Sixteenth-Century *Schwänke* Literature: The Case of Hans Wilhelm Kirchhoff's *Wendunmuth*

In the late Middle Ages literary entertainment in the form of *fabliaux*, *mæren*, *novelli*, *facetiae*, and other verse narratives experienced a tremendous intensification, increasingly appealing also to urban audiences and the intelligentsia. Both Boccaccio and Chaucer, and so Heinrich Kaufringer and Poggio Bracciolini, but then also Straparola and Marguerite de Navarre, to mention just some of the best known and most prolific representatives, produced outstanding masterpieces, drawing from a rich repertoire of European and also, until now fairly little explored Persian, Arabic, and Hebrew sources. Their comic tales combined, in the best classical tradition, the Horatian ideals of *prodesse* and *delectare*, or, instruction and delight. One of the seminal features of this vast corpus of short tales consists of their kaleidoscopic range of themes and topics, targeting individuals from many different social classes, positions, professions, but then also men and women in their gender-specific behavior, speech, and attitudes.

The popularity of this literature was considerable, so it does not come as a surprise that sixteenth-century authors continued with this tradition, but then rendered the medieval verse narratives into prose tales, in early-modern German identified as *Schwänke*—perhaps best translated into English as ‘jest narratives’ (sing.: *Schwank*). Although this genre allowed the writers to explore a huge gamut of new themes, motifs, concepts, and ideas relevant for their own times, they also drew without any hesitation considerable inspiration from their medieval sources, preferably from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, Poggio Bracciolini’s *Fascetiae*, and from a variety of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century *mæren* (verse narratives).¹

Many names of *Schwänke* authors would have to be mentioned here to do justice to the ever-growing genre, but the Alsatian Franciscan preacher Johannes Pauli (ca. 1450–1533) with his *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522) and Georg Wickram with his *Rollwagenbüchlein* (1555) truly stand out as some of the most successful and sophisticated composers of such hilarious, entertaining, but certainly also didactic

¹ Kocher, Boccaccio, 2005.

short prose narratives.² Often the *Schwänke* authors targeted the Catholic Church above all and ridiculed, or severely criticized, its representatives for alleged shortcomings and failures, continuing a tradition that was at that time already centuries old. But basically no one, neither men nor women, neither nobles nor peasants, neither merchants nor scholars, neither craftsmen nor artists, was exempt from being the object of satire and mockery, irony and laughter. As the titles of some of the major *Schwänke* collections indicate, the authors aimed for the entertainment and instruction of fellow travelers or any group of listeners in public settings (*Rollwagenbüchlein* [Little Book for the Traveling Coach], *Gartengesellschaft* [Garden Company]), and so one of the key strategies consisted of poking fun at foolish neighbors or other contemporaries by way of witticism or linguistic puns. But some *Schwänke* also targeted tyrannical rulers, incompetent administrators, untrustworthy inn-keepers, foolish peasants, greedy merchants, lusty monks and nuns, etc.

Insofar as these *Schwänke* reflect in many ways numerous different facets of everyday life, handing out blame, praise, or critical comments, heavily utilizing wit, sarcasm, and verbal cunning, and often drawing from concrete, historically somehow verifiable events, they serve intriguingly as sources for the study of the history of mentality and of everyday life. Until today, however, they have been dealt with only tentatively by German scholarship, probably because of their common emphasis on plain entertainment (which is not devoid of moral and ethical teachings), their often rather raucous tone of voice, uninhibited discussion of sexual, even scatological, matter, crude language, and seemingly low literary quality. Admitted, the contemporary tales of *Till Eulenspiegel*, perhaps by the Brunswick custom officer Hermen Bote, which share many similarities with *Schwänkeliteratur* in their treatment of scatological matters and in their reliance on verbal puns and linguistic games, have been regarded as part of the early-modern literary canon. By contrast, the huge collections of jest narratives by Kirchhof, Montanus, Lindener, Schumann, and Frey, among others, have been mostly forgotten and still await their rediscovery. Literary historians have duly mentioned them in their consideration of works produced in the sixteenth century, but only few scholars have examined any of these texts in greater detail, unless they pursued particular thematic angles.³

² For a nice collection of relevant statements in the major literary histories and critical studies on early-modern German literature regarding this genre, see *Deutsche Schwänke*, 1979, 331–60; in his epilogue, Petzoldt offers a useful introduction to the *Schwank*; see also Werner Wunderlich, “Zu den epischen Merkmalen,” 1992, 256–62; for a most recent critical analysis of the significance of the *Schwank* in early-modern print history, see Röcke, “Fiktionale Literatur,” 2004, 463–506. In the present chapter I also draw from my monograph *Deutsche Schwankliteratur*, 2009.

³ Bachorski, “Ein Diskurs,” 1996, 305–41; Wåghäll Nivre, *Women and Family Life*, 2004.

However, a rather simple quantitative factor needs to be considered to explain this odd phenomenon. Many of the *Schwänke* authors compiled such huge collections, freely copying from each other, that only few modern scholars have truly ventured into the depth of those voluminous anthologies. Significantly, they often provide fascinating evidence for the continued reception of late-medieval literature, for the poignant criticism of the Catholic clergy, the emergence of a new social group of military mercenaries, the *lansquenets*, and the growing interest in the concrete living conditions in rural villages and in small towns where most of the authors originated from or had settled. This also implied a keen interest in social and then criminal situations. Last but not least, another reason for the general neglect of this corpus of *Schwänke* has to be taken into consideration. Sixteenth-century German literature continues to be commonly identified at large with the Protestant Reformation, and then with the Catholic Counter-Reformation, not to forget Humanism, which altogether has traditionally left very little room for the actually rather extensive corpus of entertaining, didactic, comic, and erotic literature composed at the same time, to wit the considerable body of songbooks (*Liederbücher*) and prose novels (*Volksbücher*).⁴

In our search for the literary treatment of rape in medieval and early-modern German literature, the *Schwänke* actually prove to be fertile ground, though rape as such is not discussed in much greater detail or with more particular concern for the victims, compared to the literary examples from the Middle Ages. The Hessian author Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof, however, included a number of narratives in his six-volume *Wendunmuth* (literally translated as 'Change the Bad Mood') where he also turns to this crime and examines its various implications, or where he simply describes the circumstances that commonly lead to rape, without necessarily expressing criticism or entering into any detailed legal examination. We will observe, for instance, that at times when he discusses rape, the crime itself does not seem to concern him more than necessary for the plot development, whereas the opportunity to target the rapist as an especially condemnable social individual proves to be of greatest importance. Nevertheless, there are various approaches to the issue of rape in his collection of tales, which obviously underscores the discursive nature of rape also in the sixteenth century.

Both here in sixteenth-century jest narratives and in medieval courtly romances and epics this crime emerges commonly as a vehicle to discuss larger issues, such as the conflict among men (husband versus an aggressive lover) or between the Protestant and the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Kirchhof's *Schwänke* provide us

⁴ In the massive, truly excellent new literary history, *Early Modern German Literature 1350–1700*, 2007, the entire genre of *Schwänke* is virtually ignored. This is a rather common phenomenon in many other literary histories.

with an intriguing narrative platform to isolate the discourse of rape within the context of sixteenth-century German literature and to identify the specific context where the theme itself emerges and to question why it even rises to the surface.

Kirchhof was born around 1525 in Kassel as the son of Peter und Barbara Kirchhof and attended school in Eschwege in 1540 because his father had been appointed as village mayor of nearby Wanfried and forester in 1538. Shortly afterwards the future author moved to Kassel where he continued with his education under Petrus Nigidius (1501–1581). Already in 1543 Kirchhof, without letting his parents know, left school to join the lansquenets. In 1545 he was in Nuremberg, fought for a long time under Landgrave Philipp of Hesse, switched to French military service in 1548, then in 1550 he joined the Brunswick forces, and in 1552 we find him in Kassel again. He seems to have found employment with French royal troops, so in 1553 he was in Amiens, but he returned to Germany in 1554 where he fought on the side of the Bishop of Würzburg. Around that time he seems to have married.

In 1554 he moved with his wife Margarethe to Marburg where he stayed for some time with his friend Georg von Otterler, who gave him a copy of Heinrich Bebel's *Facetien* as a gift, which might have provided him with the decisive inspiration to begin writing *Schwänke* himself. After all, many of his own texts were borrowed from Bebel's collection, but he also used numerous other literary and oral sources, without shying away from including accounts about his personal experiences as a lansquenet.

In May of 1555 Kirchhof went to Kassel to take care of his sick parents and to support his father in his administrative duties. The Hessian Landgrave called upon him several times to go on diplomatic missions. Kirchhof's father died on January 9, 1561, followed by his mother on December 2 of the same year. Since 1569 Kirchhof worked as master of the city mills in Kassel. His wife died in 1576. Only in 1584 Kirchhof experienced a steep rise in his social career when the Landgrave appointed him as castellan (constable) of the castle of Spangenberg, obviously as a sign of recognition of his long years of service. There he remarried, joining hands with Margarethe Stuckenrad. After 1602 we lose all tracks of Kirchhofs, and he probably died during that time when his works went into printing.⁵

Some of the major themes in Kirchhof's *Wendunmuth* concern political problems, especially the issue of tyranny, then social conflicts within the city, the ordinary experiences of lansquenets, inn-keepers, peasants, craftsmen, students, and many

⁵ Wenzel, "Die Burggrafen," 1921: No. 11: 161–64; No. 12: 177–80, 161–64; No. 12: 177–80; Wyss, "Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof," 1892, 57–87. See also the edition of Kirchhof's *Militaris Disciplina*, 1976, XI–XV. The most detailed biographical outline is provided by Hermann Osterley, ed., Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof, *Wendunmuth*, 1980, vol. V, 4–13.

different travelers. As the author repeatedly underscores, he had witnessed those hilarious situations himself or heard specific exchanges personally during his long career as a *lansquenet*. Nevertheless, these are not simple accounts of what has happened with people in his social environment, but rather relatively sophisticated narratives determined by specific didactic, religious, and social concerns.

Most of his *Schwänke* focus on rather ordinary situations, on surprising verbal exchanges, witty remarks, misunderstandings, marital conflicts, foolish or boorish behavior, deception, lying, adultery, etc. In other words, both Kirchhof's *Schwänke* and those by his contemporaries, such as Martin Montanus, Michael Lindener, Valentin Schuhmann, derive much of their comic material from people's ordinary behavior, foolish thoughts, failures in their lives, and lack of communication. However, these jest narratives hardly ever explore serious criminal behavior, such as murder, arson, or theft. In this sense the occasional treatment of rape proves to be unusual and fascinating.

Perhaps also because the majority of his tales, as so typical for this genre at large, mostly treats minor conflicts or daily problems as they surface in almost all societies, modern scholars have not paid much attention to the individual tales, if the genre is ever scrutinized more thoroughly. But Kirchhof never shies away from discussing even specific situations where strife and social, ethical, and moral transgressions occur. Intriguingly then, he also incorporated a handful of *Schwänke* that are predicated on the crime of rape.

In "Ein schwere rach deß ehebruchs" (vol. I, no. 324, 365–66), the narrator reports about a foolish young man who constantly praises the beauty of his wife yet also expresses his deep-seated fear that some other man might seduce her. He makes a fool of himself because he even expresses his worries that another man could go so far as just to touch her, which would deeply hurt his passionate love of her, or expose his insecurity. One day, however, the couple travels through a forest where they are surprised by a horseman ("reuter"), a man of somehow rather dubious social standing, who forces the husband to hand over his wife to him because he wants to rape her. In order to control the silly peasant and to make him look particularly foolish, the rapist spreads out his coat on the floor and leads his own horse onto it. Next he forces the peasant to hold the horse at its rein, but he threatens the man with a severe beating, if not killing, if the horse would step beyond the coat even once.

We are not informed about the next event, but we can be certain that the wife is raped because the horseman subsequently leaves the scene, whereas the wife severely berates her husband for not having protected her: "schalt das weib iren mann hefftig seiner kleinmütigkeit halber" (365; the wife yelled at her husband because of his cowardice). The act of the rape itself is characterized by the narrator

as a crime committed out of “mutwillen” (365; ruthlessness), and it would seem, as the poor woman implies, that her husband really would have been obligated to defend his wife energetically. However, the foolish peasant defends himself meekly, arguing that he had to obey the knight’s order if he did not want to lose his life. Moreover, and thereby revealing his utter lack of courage and character, he emphasizes that he had made the horse step on the coat many times (“mit meiner wehr voller löcher gestoßen,” 366, allowed to make a lot of holes in it). This was supposed to be his revenge for the rape of his wife, which quickly reveals an explicitly pornographic allusion insofar as the holes in the coat are equated with the wife’s vagina. Instead of fighting on behalf of his wife, the peasant used the horse to get his revenge of the rapist, perhaps not fully understanding the real meaning of the crime committed right in front of his own eyes and the implications for his poor wife.

With this surprisingly curt and absurd argument the narrator simply rests his case, but he has implicitly underscored several points with the help of his witty tale. First, the husband was excessively jealous when there was no danger for his wife, yet when an actual threat and then attack occurred, leading to her rape, he did not even dare to defend his wife effectively, or rather not at all, demonstrating that his publicly confessed love for his wife apparently did not go deep enough to fight boldly and with all his might against the criminal in the forest. Second, her rape is identified, even if only fleetingly, as a vile and criminal act that should have been stopped by the peasant husband, but since they both had been surprised by the horseman in the middle of the forest, they could not draw from outside help. Third, the wife bitterly complains about her terrible abuse, yet she does not find any real support in her husband because he reveals an astonishing degree of ignorance and cowardice. While the rapist abused the poor woman, the husband did not dare to step forward and defend his wife. This is almost exactly the same case in one of Heinrich Kaufringer’s tales (“Der feige Ehemann”), and so also in one of the tales contained in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, hence a rather common trope in late-medieval erotic literature.⁶

The rapist knows too well that his menacing words directed at the peasant would have the desired effect, and by forcing him to hold the horse while he himself sleeps with the wife, he is sure that the husband has no hands free even to consider picking up a weapon.

In Kaufringer’s tale “Der feige Ehemann” the husband had at least planned to scare the nobleman out of his wits and thus to defend the honor of his house and so his own as the head of the family, which ultimately failed, of course, because of his cowardice. And he becomes, tragically, even instrumental in the rape of his own wife because he had encouraged her to accept the young nobleman’s wooing

⁶ See the chapter on rape in the *mæren* literature, above.

and to invite him in as a way to trap him and then catch him *in flagrante*. In our *Schwank*, on the other hand, the peasant is identified right from the start as “Iellmaul und rechter löffel” (365, approximately: loudmouth and real coward), who sings his wife’s praise everywhere, but perhaps too obtrusively, emphasizing her most friendly nature: “wie die so freundlich were” (365).

Curiously, and certainly significantly for the interpretation of this narrative, he also signals to everyone how afraid he is of any potential challenger. The peasant almost seems to invite other men to challenge him, as happens indeed when they travel alone through the forest, although this *Schwank* is too brief to trace any possible connections between the husband’s public utterances about his wife and the violent horseman. In other words, we are dealing with nothing but a chance meeting in the lonely forest where the crime of rape can be carried out without any authorities nearby to step in and help the victim.

“Ein schwere rach deß ehebruchs” also operates with an intriguing association of the rape of the wife with the horse that the husband has to hold during the entire crime scene. Horses are traditionally associated with women, especially within the discourse of sexuality and then rape, as can be commonly observed in late-medieval narratives.⁷ Sexual encounters, particularly in a violent context, often rely on references to horses, which is the case here as well. The “reuter” utilizes his own horse as a convenient tool to carry out the rape, forcing the peasant to hold the rein and to watch helplessly while he himself rapes his victim, transforming him into an idiotic voyeur. The peasant, by the same token, employs the horse to damage the coat, arguing that this would constitute an appropriate form of revenge, not realizing how impotent he proves to be through this very behavior. To stay within the image, while the “reuter” (literally: horseman) rides the abused wife, the peasant can do nothing but to hold the other man’s horse—clearly a signal of having been transformed into a dependent servant following orders—though he makes the animal—a grotesque replacement of his wife—stamp the coat repeatedly so as to destroy it as much as possible.

The victim, in other words, the helpless woman, finds no protection and no support, and can only furiously lambast her husband at the end, though even then he cuts her short and defends himself with his absurd, yet also revelatory argument that he had revenged his wife’s rape by having ‘raped’ the horseman’s coat, which sheds considerable light on his lack of courage, power, and resolve.

Overall, Kirchhof here relates very briefly a humorous tale and invites us to laugh although the deplorable woman is brutally raped. The comic is predicated on the horseman’s energetic and witty strategy in overpowering the peasant couple, raping the wife, and making the husband to an utter fool by forcing him

⁷ *Animals and Women*, 1995, 57–59; Vasvári, “‘Buon cavallo,’” 2004, 313–36. See also Brinker-von der Heyde, “Weiber – Herrschaft,” 1999, 47–66.

to watch the entire scene unfolding before his eyes, fearful of his own life and not knowing how to handle the dangerous situation. Insofar as the horseman has handed over the reins to the peasant, he has temporarily traded the horse for the other man's wife, in a way signaling that the fool is not smart or strong enough to hold on to his own wife and so deserves to be 'tied' to the horse instead.

Of course, we should feel pity for the real victim, but the actual target of this *Schwank* is the ignoramus peasant, which receives additional confirmation from the two narratives that frame this one. In the following tale ("Von einem deßgleichen," no. 325), the wife deliberately invites her wooer in and sleeps with him, while her stupid husband does not even fully comprehend what is going on in his own house. He childishly believes that he has trumped the wooer whom he has observed sleeping with his wife by not handing over the change for the money that he had paid for wine on his competitor's behalf. In the preceding tale ("Von zweyen ehrendieben," no. 323), two wooers are vying with each other to sleep with a married woman, but first the one, then the other has to hide when the husband returns home. When she yells at the latter that he has not only neglected her, but has also wasted all their money, he pleads with God for help, pointing upwards. This is the cue for one of the wooer who erroneously believes that he has been espied, so he comes out of his hiding place. He insists, however, that the priest should pay the other half of the lost gamble money, which surprisingly suffices to calm the poor husband who does not even take into account that these two men had improperly entered his house and obviously intended to commit adultery with his wife. At any rate, neither here nor there does the foolish husband pursue the matter in any detail and does not seem to care that he has been badly cuckolded. Of course, we must not overlook the topical nature of this tale, as we find, for instance, a very similar example already ca. one hundred years earlier in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* in the thirty-fourth story.⁸ Apparently, foolish husbands seem to have been a stock figure in late-medieval literature, and so particularly in the genre of *Schwänke*.⁹

Both times, and so in the central narrative with the rape scene, the satire aims at a husband's dumb-wittedness and impotence. The fact that the poor wife in "Ein schwere rach deß ehebruchs" (no. 324) is sexually violated and brutally abused by the horseman plays an important part for the plot development. However, Kirchhof does not address this crime just for its own sake; instead it only provides the critical narrative platform to ridicule the peasant who believes that he can get his revenge against the other man who rapes his wife by making the

⁸ For an English translation, see Douglas, *One Hundred Merrie*, 1899 [?]; here cited from the online version at: www.gutenberg.org/files/18575-8/txt.

⁹ In many proverbial statements the horse is often associated with sexuality, referring both to the man or the woman, see Röhrich, *Das große Lexikon*, vol. 2, 1992, 1169.

latter's horse stomp on the coat and thus creating holes in it, trying to replicate with the horse what the criminal is doing to his wife. In other words, once again, the real conflict dealt with concerns the relationship between these two men, the one crude and violent, the other boorish and impotent, whereas the wife serves in this narrative context only for the underlying plot development.

The situation in "Einer beschlefft ein magd" (no. 334) where we encounter the conflict of rape once again proves to be very different in its framework, practical outcome, and ethical orientation. In this *Schwank* a man rapes a young woman while she is asleep and impregnates her, without knowing of the consequences of this sexual tryst. At the end, however, once he has happened to visit the city again and then learns of the true outcome of this rape, he immediately demonstrates his great sense of honor and marries the young woman and mother, thus fully compensating for his previous wrongdoing.

This *Schwank* deserves close attention not only because here we hear of a rape case, but also because the motif was later to be copied, or at least repeated, by the famous German classicist author Heinrich von Kleist in his novella "Die Marquise von O. . . ." (1808). Kleist might also have been influenced by three other literary sources with the same motif, (1) Michel de Montaigne's (1533–1592) *Essais* (1588, 2nd chapt. of the 2nd book), (2) an anonymous story published in the *Berlinische Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks* (April 1798), or (3) Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761).¹⁰ Each time the focus rests on a young woman who falls asleep and is sexually abused in this odd situation by a man without realizing what has happened to her. Whether Kleist might have been familiar with the *Schwank* in Kirchhoff's collection cannot be determined; suffice it here to point out the similarities of the motif.

In a Cologne inn, a group of young men enjoys drinking together, and one of them suddenly fancies the servant woman whom he eventually follows down into the cellar where she is regularly getting more wine for the guests. But at that moment the young man finds her asleep down there, and, utilizing the opportunity, he rapes her. Tragically, he also impregnates her in the process, although she does not seem to realize anything, perhaps because of her great exhaustion after a long day's work. Deviously, perhaps to make a fool of her, the young man places a

¹⁰ See the commentary to Kleist, *Erzählungen*, 1990, 770–72. For some critical studies on Kleist's narrative, see Vinken and Haverkamp, "Die zurechtgelegte Frau," 1994, 127–47, and Neumann, "Skandalon," 1994, 149–92. Neumann assumes that Cervantes's text also might have been known to Kleist, 179, without offering any evidence. Kirchhoff's *Schwank* follows the same narrative structures, but we have no way of confirming whether Kleist might have been familiar with sixteenth-century *Schwank* literature.

three-legged stool in front of her, as if that piece of furniture might have been responsible for having robbed her of her virginity.

When her pregnancy becomes noticeable, her foster-father tries in vain to learn the name of the perpetrator. She does not even know it herself and can only refer to the three-legged stool—perhaps a pornographic allusion—so the awkward situation progresses until she delivers a child. The inn-keeper, in his kindness, allows her and her son to stay with him despite the dishonorable situation, but he hangs the stool in the ceiling, telling everyone who inquires about the odd arrangement that this piece of furniture must have been responsible for the pregnancy.

Characteristic for a *Schwank*, the inn-keeper's comment proves to be highly hilarious because he identifies the stool as a human being who deserves to be punished for the rape of the young woman: "Er muß also büßen, dieweil er meiner tochter ein kind gezimmeret hat" (376; He must do penance in this way because he built [created] a child for my daughter). In other words, he publicly exposes the crime of rape of his foster-daughter and hopes that he might be able, in the course of time, to shame the perpetrator so much that he will finally come forward and admit his guilt. Moreover, he uses a highly metaphorical language, resorting to the verb 'zimmern' (to do carpentry work), correlating the stool with the rape, which was also, in this sense, a work of a craftsman. It deserves to be noted, however, that this pun does not serve to belittle the rape or to poke fun at the female victim; on the contrary, the inn-keeper publicly demonstrates his anger and frustration because he knows that a crime has occurred since he would like to provoke the perpetrator and to shame him to reveal his guilt.

Significantly, this plan finally becomes reality because a few years later the rapist returns to Cologne and stops at the same inn again, where he soon learns of the reason why the curious stool is suspended from the ceiling. He immediately realizes that he himself, whom the stool has represented for the whole time, is the father of the young child, but instead of admitting his guilt, he first inquires quietly about the woman's public standing and is delighted to receive nothing but good reports. Only now does he finally step forward and reveal to the inn-keeper that he had raped the young woman and must be the father of her child. In order to remedy the situation, he asks for her hand, and his request is quickly approved without there being any criminal consequences for his wrong-doing in the first place.

In the epimythion, a six-verse stanza, which is a common didactic element in almost all of Kirchhof's *Schwänke*, the narrator reflects upon the ethical and moral implications of his tale. He does not, however, condemn the rape as outright as one would expect. Instead, he is primarily interested in the young man's sincere effort to pay honestly for his sexual transgression and to allow the mother of his child to regain her public reputation:

Jungfrauen schmehen und schand zuokern,
 Und mit der ehe sie wider ehrn,
 Viel höher lob darmit verdient,
 Als der eim könig wider gwinnt,
 Verlornes gold und edelgstein,
 Doch, die das erst lohn, besser sein.

[Those who rape virgins and cause them public shame, but then honor them by marrying them gain much higher praise thereby than the person who recovers a king's lost gold and jewels. Indeed, those who do the first are better.]

Again, this narrative does not examine the moral and legal implications of rape as such, though Kirchhof does not hold back in his explicit condemnation of the crime committed by the young man. Moreover, there are no references to any possible legal persecutions of the rapist insofar as the inn-keeper takes it completely upon himself to care for the young mother and to provide her protection. By contrast, Kirchhof seems to be primarily concerned with honorable behavior and how an individual can redeem himself by way of accepting his guilt and facing his own shortcomings. After all, the account of the poor maid who is raped in her sleep is framed by a larger context concerning serious social and moral problems in the city of Cologne and other urban centers. Although the author does not specify the concrete background, he is obviously also referring to the institution of prostitution as well that more often than not leads to unwelcome pregnancy.¹¹

As we learn from the narrator's comments, helpless in their poverty, the morally fallen mothers abandon their new-born children in the hope for public charity.¹² The Cologne city government, indeed, has set up orphanages for those very offsprings, some of whom are regularly adopted by rich citizens. As the narrator comments, however, the motivation for such kindness would not be the individual's altruism; rather, those very foster-fathers would, in all likelihood, have to be identified as the biological fathers because they must have slept with some of the prostitutes: "die auch wol heimlich ire vätter seyn" (375; who must be their fathers in secret).

Compared to the young man's rape of the maid, these rich merchants or craftsmen are perhaps as guilty, if not even worse, as he, so we have to conclude that the author here alludes to pervasive sexual transgressions within late-medieval city life. This *Schwank*, hence, thematizes a variety of sexual crimes and profiles the catastrophic consequences of men's irresponsible, in fact criminal, behavior, for unmarried women, whether the former sleep with prostitutes or rape

¹¹ Although there is already much research on the history of prostitution, for our purposes, the study by Hemmie, *Ungeordnete Unzucht*, 2007, is most pertinent.

¹² Brodman, *Charity and Religion*, 2009.

a young woman, without accepting any responsibility if their sexual partner conceives in the process. Nevertheless, as much as the rich citizens can remedy this situation, the young man, once he has learned that his act of rape had led to the servant woman's pregnancy, takes the proper steps and offers to marry her, especially because he learns of her honorable reputation, meaning that she does not belong to the group of prostitutes the narrator had referred to at the beginning. Kirchhof does not condone rape at all, of course, but he outlines in his tale simple yet important steps that men who commit such transgression can or should take to compensate for the suffering of their female victims.

Of course, the situation could have developed into a fiasco for the young woman and her child if the inn-keeper had not been so kind and if later the neighbors had not given her so much praise for her honorable behavior. In the contrary case the young man would not have revealed his guilt and would not have offered to marry her, which would have doubly victimized mother and child.

Altogether, this *Schwank* is clearly predicated on the topic of rape as a highly problematic scenario in early-modern urban life. In this case it proves to be a premeditated crime insofar as the young man had, once he had noticed the young woman, deliberately invited her to drink with him regularly, obviously with the clear intent to win her favor or rather to lead her astray. In the evening, when everyone in his party seemed to be drunk and half unconscious, he followed the maid down to the cellar, where he found her deep asleep as a result of "deß trinkens, auch müdigkeit und viel lauffens halber" (375; due to the drinking, her exhaustion, and all the running around).¹³ Knowing too well that no one was around at that hidden location and at that late hour, the young man then proceeded to rape her in such a fashion "daß sie nichts davon wußte" (375; that she did not know anything about it). In other words, all the essential elements characterizing rape are in place: a young woman not properly guarded or protected by family members; a man who has cast his eyes on her, then deliberately makes her drunk, follows her to the lonely place in the cellar, where he subsequently abuses her sexually.

The narrator details the entire situation in a lively fashion and illustrates clearly what seems to have been a common scenario at that time, with a popular inn culture where young unmarried women work as waitresses, easily exposed to sexual harassment. He explicitly expresses his pity for the young woman: "dem gueten meidlein ward das beuchlein schwellend" (376; the belly of the good girl began to swell), and paints the foster-father as a positive figure because he does

¹³ The problem of alcoholism in the Middle Ages and the early modern time is discussed by Martin, *Alcohol*, 2001; see especially her chapter on alehouses, taverns, and their association with prostitution, 58–78.

not chase mother and her son away from his house despite the disgrace and shame she had brought upon his inn.

Let us also take into consideration the context of this one *Schwank* in order to evaluate the choice of the theme, rape, in the larger framework of this anthology of tales. In "Von einem bauwren, der auff ein mal hundert thaler berbuelete" (no. 332) a rich and arrogant land owner has lent hundred ducats to an inn-keeper in another village. One day, when he visits his debtor to ask for his money back, he falls head over heels in love with the other man's wife, at least feels passionately attracted to her, to which she obviously responds most positively. But they are soon surprised by the husband who threatens to kill the land owner, who successfully pleads for his life by promising him to let him keep the debt as his own. Next, however, the inn-keeper chases away his wife, forcing her to return to her father's house, who, to smooth over the scandal, also grants his son-in-law hundred ducats just for taking back his wife. The narrator only comments that his account is based on an actual event that had happened in the year 1558.

In the *Schwank* „Einer hat ein magd beschlaffen" (no. 335), which follows the tale about the rape in the Cologne inn, a peasant in the district of Kassel (northern Hesse) has slept with a farm maid. She had granted him that wish after he had promised to marry her. The narrative indicates a rather violent tryst, almost tantamount to rape: "so hatte er sie auff heuw genommen und mit ihr gehandelt, daß ichs nicht sagen darff" (376; he had taken her to the hay stack and done with her, what I must not tell). However, subsequently he reneges on his promise and denies that had ever pledged to take her as his wife. Ultimately, this leads to court proceedings, in which, remarkably, the village mayor employs a successful rhetorical strategy to reveal the truth and to convict him on the basis of his involuntary confession.

The narrator emphasizes clearly that this peasant acted dishonorably: "nicht allein sie nicht wie der zuo Cöllen zuo ehren, sondern, da er mit geschicklichkeit hette kommen können, sie viel lieber under den leuten in allen schanden außgebreitet" (377; he did not give her honor like the man in Cologne, which he could have done very easily; instead he would have liked to expose her to public shame). Altogether, the group of *Schwänke* here focuses on honorable behavior in the gender relationships on the most basic level, i.e., the treatment of rape in the middle story does not come as a real surprise. Nevertheless, in "Einer beschlefft ein magd" the young man's criminal behavior ultimately turns out to be less reprehensible than the one displayed by the other men in the neighboring stories who either commit adultery and then have to pay a huge ransom, or who pretend to be interested in marriage, but in reality only want to enjoy sex.

As Kirchhof, however, clearly implies, sexual violence could easily occur any time, particularly when alcohol was involved. Yet altogether, the author does not

fully reflect a deep concern with rape as a sexual crime; instead his *Schwank* "Einer beschlefft ein magd" ultimately provides an example of honorable behavior by a rapist who *post factum* realizes how much he has transgressed and then wants to redeem himself and to help his former victim to regain her social status. Nevertheless, despite some sympathy for the young woman, the victim does not gain much in character profile, and we hardly hear anything about her suffering because, as is so often the case, the true interest rests in the exchanges and negotiations between the two men.

As a Protestant, Kirchhof happily harped on the traditional theme of anticlericalism so powerfully employed for decades before him already by other opponents of the Catholic Church.¹⁴ One striking example proves to be his *Schwank* "Von der römischen keuschheit" (no. 398) the motif of which he had borrowed from Boccaccio's second story from the first day in his *Decameron* and which was adopted many times thereafter by other writers.¹⁵ Here a Jew who serves at the court of Dresden and enjoys great respect for his skills and knowledge is strongly encouraged to convert to Christianity. He refuses to do so for a long time, until he finally decides to put that other religion to a test and travels to Rome to observe with his own eyes how the highest representatives of the clergy perform. Of course, he discovers the worst conditions, yet since the Christian God still obviously protects the representatives of His Church, he finds sufficient proof for the superiority of that faith and converts.

But what crimes occur at the papal court? The narrator lists virtually every possible sexual transgression, such as "ehebrecherey und blutschand" (449; adultery and incest). Then he enters into a long diatribe regarding the endless list of other perpetrations of the worst kind: "Über vilfaltige frauwen- und jungkfrauenschwächen, ist in stätem gebrauch das knabenschenden und stumme sünden, dergleichen Sodoma und Gomorra kaum hat treiben könne oder mögen; summa alle winckel stecken voll hueren und bueben, alle unzucht und unsaubre fleichgirigkeit springt in diser statt, die sich rümet ein mutter der gottsforcht, ja deß teuffels mastkoben, zu seyn" (449; Apart from numerous cases of raping women and virgins, the rape of young boys and the silent sin [homosexuality] are a common praxis; not even Sodom or Gomorrah had been able to commit so much crime; altogether every corner is filled with male and female prostitutes; every sexual transgression and unclean fleshly lust springs up in this city that boasts to be the mother of the fear of God, and yes, even to be the devil's pigsty).

¹⁴ See the contributions to *Anticlericalism*, 1993.

¹⁵ A very good webpage with much valuable material on Boccaccio, including the English translation, proves to be:
<http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameron/engDecShowText.php?myID=nov0102&expand=day01> (last accessed on Feb. 14, 2011)

The reason for all those horrible transgressions is also given, and it is simply associated with the rule by the Church to enforce celibacy of its entire clergy: "keine eheweiber nach göttlicher ordnung, ja derselben gantz zuwider, das huerenleben vergönnen wollen" (449; it does not want to allow them to have wives according to the divine order; instead it is willing to permit them to enjoy prostitutes). But this very concern to follow prescribed rules also facilitated the devastating development of sexual crimes, including rape. It would be tantamount to a severe misreading, as we observe in many previous studies on *Schwänke* literature, to perceive in them primarily jest and entertainment without significant social implications. Certainly, our narratives also invite, and quite decidedly so, laughter and mockery at the foolish figures and behavior, but the critical examination of cases of rape, for instance, indicates the extent to which also severe social issues were at stake.¹⁶

This concern with the devastating consequences of rape finds its probably most powerful manifestation in the *Schwank* "Ein mönch ist ein jungkfrauenschender im land zu Preussen" (no. 464b) that easily proves to be the most dramatic and graphic rape narrative in all of medieval and early-modern literature. But Kirchhof confirms specifically that he based his account on a historical event: "Anno domini des verschieen 1556 jars ist zu Dantgen in Preussen ein bettlermönch seiner art nach terminieren und haussieren gangen" (523; In the year of the Lord of the past year 1556 in Danzig in Prussia a begging monk [friar] went asking for alms and gifts). During his visitations, he happens to enter a widow's house where he encounters no one but an eight year old girl. The narrator uses the epithet "bößwicht" right away to indicate the catastrophic development about to happen. The monk briefly considers his situation, being alone with the girl, and decides to rape her. The description that follows details the rapist's thought processes and then turns to his beastly action which almost causes the poor girl's death. Her mother feels greatest grief and can hardly be comforted. The monk, however, is apprehended by the authorities and thrown into prison. Whether he was then actually punished for his ghastly deed remains uncertain, and the narrator even emphasizes that if the monk's victim had not been the daughter of the governor's sister, the crime would not even have been treated as such: "dise greuwliche schand noch für keine sünd gehalten, noch straffwirdig sey" (524; this horrifying shameful act would not have been regarded as a sin, not even bad enough to be punished).

¹⁶ Deutsche Schwankliteratur, ed. Wunderlich, vol. II, 1992, 214, argues: "An das Verhalten seiner Helden legt der Schwank ursprünglich keine ethischen Maßstäbe an, vermittelt im Handlungsergebnis keine Moral, formuliert keine Handlungsanweisungen" (The jest narrative does not impose any ethical norms on its protagonists, does not convey any morality, and does not formulate any directives for proper behavior).

Consequently, the narrator appeals to God to intervene Himself and to judge personally so that justice can be applied in this ghastly case, which certainly emerges as the worst possible kind of rape because it affects an innocent young girl who almost dies from her wounds. The radical Protestant Kirchhof then concludes his account by appealing to his audience to accept his advice that not one among the Catholic clergy can be trusted and that all should be forced to leave (524).

The focal point of his criticism targets the hypocrisy of the representatives of the Church who pretend during daytime to serve God, but at nighttime only pursue their own lust and carry out all kinds of sexual abominations. Curiously, however, as if he had lost sight of the actual case discussed above, Kirchhof concludes his *Schwank* with explicit criticism of clerics who “in die tractant filium virginis, et in nocte filiam Veneris” (524; worship during the day the son of the Virgin, and at night the daughter of Venus). Kirchhof next translates the Latin into German, but varies slightly the second part into: “mit jungkfrau wueren” (whore around with young women [not virgins, though the phrase seems to imply it]).

Nevertheless, the entire tale describes in most gruesome and brutal, yet also in most powerful terms, the rape of the young girl. The narrator tries his best to provide us with a psychological analysis of the monk's emotions and also perverted thoughts, shedding important light on the development of his lustful feelings and his reckless attitude toward the life of others. For this monk the young girl is nothing but a sexual object that he is entitled to conquer and to use for his own sexual needs. Once he has entered the house and realized that no one else but the girl is around, his “keusche[] engel” (523) tempts him to utilize this unique opportunity.¹⁷

As the narrator comments, this chaste angel is normally seated behind Saint Anthony, a metaphorical expression well known in the Catholic Church, and certainly meant in a satirical fashion because now this angel has found his place in his cap on top of his head and is named “krumme tilcke” (crooked cunning?). So it is not an angel, but a little devil who even dares to speak to the monk: “He bruder, wie düncket dich? Das wer wol gut hünerfleisch für ein leckermeulein!” (523; Hey, brother, what do you think? This would certainly be good chicken meat for a little gourmet!).

Playing on the requirement for monks to submit themselves regularly under a regiment of fasting, the inner voice identifies the poor girl as a “liebliche[] braten für einen, der lang gefastet hat!” (523; a delightful roast beef for someone who has fasted for a long time). But this fasting is now referred to sexual matters from

¹⁷ At close analysis, we observe, of course, the same situation in the *mære* “Dis ist von dem heselin,” where the young man proceeds with the barter of hare for sex (*minne*) only once he has learned that the peasant woman is all alone; see my discussion above.

which the monk does not need to abstain all the time. To make the situation worse, the goddess of monasteries, lady Venus—a double irony, ridiculing all monks and nuns as servants of the heathen goddess Venus, hence as entirely subject to sexual passions—raises her head within the monk's cap and blindfolds Cupid's eyes who is aiming his arrow at the prey, the young girl. The subsequent comment might signal a certain degree of pity with the monk who is entirely overrun by sexual passions: "wie ward da dem armen bruder so näckisch" (523; how confused did this poor brother feel). But the following interior monologue destroys this pretended sympathy. The monk reflects on the long period of fasting that he has had to endure during the entire season of the advent, i.e., the month of December, but he obviously does not mean a fasting in terms of food deprivation. Instead, he is thinking of sexual pleasures that he had to abstain from contrary to his own wishes but in conformity with the strict rules of his order. His desire focuses on this young girl because she represents, to stay in the image, as horrifying as it might be, "newe[] speiß, solche[s] junge[s] niedliche[s] hünerfleisch" (523; new food, such young, delightful chicken meat). Further, since the Prior in his monastery eats this kind of food every day, meaning, enjoys sexual pleasures, "so kan ichs auch essen, weils mir warden kan" (523; hence I can also eat it if I come across it), now merging the two metaphorical levels.

Once the monk has reached this conclusion, all moral floodgates break open and he turns to action. He recklessly and viciously attacks the young girl, disregarding any moral, ethical, religious, or legal considerations or constraints. The narrator characterizes him as "huerensüchtig mönch" (523; a monk addicted to prostitutes) who has lost all self-discipline and rationality. He throws himself upon the poor girl, pushes and drags her down into the cellar—in fact, the cellar seems to be a preferred space for committing rape in the world of the early-modern urban society—where he pushes her down behind a barrel and ruthlessly takes his pleasure. The narrator describes in most moving terms the violation of this young innocent body, a most deplorable victim of a monk's sexual lust, which has been artificially contained because of the monastic rules and now finds its egregious and violent outlet with the eight-year old girl.

The account of the actual rape focuses on the various body parts that the monk attacks, though not necessarily the girl's genitals: "gegen seine schamhafte äuglein, gegen die züchtigen ohren und gegen das zarte hertz" (523; against its modest little eyes, against the obedient ears, and against the tender heart). The narrator voices the most vehement lament about the terrifying victimization of the "kleine[], junge[], keusche[] und achtjerrige[] jungkfreuweliche [] fleisch und bluot" (523; small, young, chaste, and eight-year old virginal flesh and blood). By contrast, the monk's behavior is characterized as "schamloß, übernatürlich und unmenschlich, als nicht zuo sagen ist" (523–24; shameless, unnatural, and inhuman; one cannot even describe it). The consequences of the rape, as illustrated

by the narrator, confirm the brutality of the monk's action: "daß man auch das edle kind in einem trog für seiner hertzlíeben muottter, der wittfrauen, habe tragen müssen" (523; they had to carry the noble child in a pigs' feeding tray to its heartloving mother, the widow).

The narrator strongly underscores how much pity he feels for the poor mother, and then turns to the monk again, subsequently also to the entire clergy: "Pfui der unbeweibten geistlichen keuschheit, der nicht ein hündlein zuo trauwen ist!" (524; Yuk on the unmarried clerical chastity to whom not even a little dog can be entrusted!). Not content with these few remarks, he engages in a lengthy diatribe against rapists who attack children and identifies them as transgressors even against Christ Himself: "dem bluotrunstigen jungkfrauschender (der ein solchs edeles seelchen, so newwlich für acht jaren erst mit dem theuren bluot Christi in der tauff gewaschen und geheiliget, verunreiniget . . .)" (524; this blood-thirsty rapist of virgins [she who has only recently been washed and sanctified in the precious blood of Christ] has soiled such a noble little soul of only eight years of age).

To underscore and reemphasize the viciousness of the monk's sexual crime, the narrator sings a lengthy song of spiritual praise of the young victim, calling her a "tempelchen gottes, den altar deß hohen priesters Christ und das schöne bettheußlein deß heiligen geistes" (524; the little temple of God, the altar of the high priest Christ, and the beautiful praying house of the Holy Spirit). By contrast, the beastly perpetrator is severely condemned for having caused the worst damage to the innocent soul of his victim: "in diesem jungen hertzen sogar schmeloß beflecket, entweihet und zernichtet . . ." (524; he has soiled, defiled, and destroyed rudely in this young heart . . .)

For the narrator, the monk represents a most evil character who would deserve subjection under the most severe punishment, either the rack, burning on a grill, or the wheel, although even such death penalty would not be adequate for the severity of his crime: "(ach vil zuo gnedig)" (524; [alas, much too mercifully]). And the young victim, whose survival of the rape attack remains somewhat doubtful, emerges as an almost saintly figure, if not as a martyr, whom the narrator glorifies as a worthy successor to Christ in her own kind of passion.

Kirchhof here presents us with a most intriguing account of a rape that is determined by several strategies. Undoubtedly, the main objective of his narrative proves to be to cast monks at large as vile creatures who cannot be trusted, who easily reveal their deceptive and criminal character, and who turn out to be the worst hypocrites. In addition, because the Church enforces the celibacy rule for all their clerics, the ultimate responsibility for this crime of rape rests with the Church, though the monk is also condemned as an individual in most severe terms. Once he has espied the young girl and realized the opportunity for him to abuse her, he discards all second thoughts, hence all moral and ethical concerns

because he has suffered already too long from sexual deprivation and yet knows that his own superior shamelessly enjoys physical pleasures on a daily basis.

Although he is later apprehended and imprisoned by the authorities, the narrator voices considerable doubts as to how much the laws will be really enforced in this case because the courts are biased in favor of clerics: "wil man sagen, daß dise greuwliche schand noch für keine sünd gehalten, noch straffwirdig sey" (524; they would say that this horrible and shameful act might not be regarded as a sin, and not even worthy of punishment). In other words, he questions how much the government is really free of the influence exerted by the Church, and worries that this monstrous monk might not even receive the punishment that he truly deserves.

Ultimately, Kirchhof's anticlericalism finds its full expression here insofar the monk, as a regular representative of the Church, deliberately commits one of the worst crimes, raping an innocent eight-year old girl, the daughter of a widow who almost passes away out of grief over the child's extreme suffering at the hand of this wicked monk. Nevertheless, as indicated above, this *Schwank* also pursues a psychological strategy, outlining and formulating in impressive detail the inner thought processes and emotions raging through the monk when he encounters the young girl. For him, the girl's young age is of no concern; instead he regards her as particularly attractive, as he compares her to tender chicken meat that would be most appealing to his raging sexual hunger. As Kirchhof's epimythion signals, the reasons for rape committed by members of the clergy are directly related to the celibacy rule. Very much in conformity with the general Protestant propaganda against the Catholic Church, the author adamantly rejects celibacy and characterizes it as the essential catalyst motivating the miserable creature of a monk to commit his horrible crime: "Dem, was gott und d'natur hat geben / Zum brauch, vorsetzlich widerstreben, / Ist gfallen aus fleischs lüsten ban, / Und seyn deß teuffels zuogespan" (524; He who deliberately resists to making use of what God and nature have given, falls outside of the barriers set to the fleshly lust and becomes the devil's companion).

Of course, Kirchhof's explanation would not be satisfactory at all today for the critical analysis of the causes leading to child molestation and the rape of such a young girl (pedophilia), but his narrative still sheds important light on the discourse of rape in sixteenth-century Germany, and probably elsewhere as well. Our *Schwank* examines the circumstances, elements, and consequences of rape, particularly of an eight-year-old child, in unparalleled detail, creating a most dramatic and drastic account that forces us to witness the brutality with which the monk actually overpowers and abuses the poor girl.

In fact, there is virtually no other literary example in medieval and early-modern literature where rape is described in such direct terms, forcing us to suffer with the victim through the whole drama in all horrifying details. Whereas in some of

Kirchhof's previous *Schwänke* a man takes advantage of a young woman while she is asleep or cannot defend herself energetically enough to prevent being raped, here we encounter the worst type of rape, that of an innocent and helpless child. Of course, we must never forget that Kirchhof specifically intended to denigrate the Catholic Church with this account, but despite the political purpose behind this narrative, this literary account proves to be, undoubtedly, one of the most powerful, if not the most direct and graphic descriptions of rape in medieval and early-modern literature. The author has only condemnatory words for this case, but he also allows us to gain insight into the psychological motives that drive the rapist.

Ultimately, despite the most repulsive nature of this scene, Kirchhof's *Schwank* emerges as a most fascinating, linguistically highly sophisticated account that excels through its considerable literary accomplishment, combining the legal with the psychological discourse and merging it with the overarching theme of anticlericalism in a most intensive fashion, bringing to light in a truly impressive fashion the causes of, motifs, and reasons for rape. There is no question that the narrator severely condemns the monk's behavior and identifies him as a veritably detestable criminal, especially because he abuses a little girl and almost kills it through the sexual act. Nevertheless, in its narrative context, the account itself emerges as one of the most dramatic literary reflections on this crime.

The narrative context here is determined by anticlericalism, but none of the neighboring *Schwänke* pursues such a harsh, actually horrifying theme. Altogether, to emphasize it once again, Kirchhof seems to be the very first, if not the only, medieval and early-modern German writer to address the crime of rape in such a radical, unmitigated fashion. But this does not mean, as we have seen many times above, that he was the only one to deal critically with the problem of rape for the entire society. Rape constituted, tragically, a significant topic of public discourse also in sixteenth-century entertaining and allegedly simply light-hearted literature.¹⁸ It would be too simplistic to assume that Kirchhof, like other composers of *Schwänke*, intended to alert his audience to a legal problem in the first place. More likely, he drew, just as most of his contemporaries, from a treasure house of literary motifs and from his personal experiences to discuss a variety of social conditions, problems, and concerns. We can be certain now that the crime of rape must have been common enough to enter the world of the *Schwänke* as well, which emerge altogether as a significant platform to explore the drastic and dangerous consequences of this crime not only for the female individual, but for society at large. We might have to admit that all the cases discussed here are predicated on the basic question how men can operate

¹⁸ See, for instance, Swärdh, *Rape*, 2003.

effectively and honorably in this world, and this also with respect to women. When the case of rape occurs, we commonly also discover that the target of criticism are the responsible men (husbands, fathers, and the rapists themselves) and their relationship to each other. Nevertheless, wherever the focus might rest, Kirchhof and others also bring to light women's suffering at the hand of rapists and express their great concern about this crime. The literary discourse initiated by the authors of the jest narratives also contributed to the raising of awareness about the profound dangers of rape in sixteenth-century Germany.

Epilogue

The literary discourse can provide fundamental insights into critical problems in human life, whether past, present, or future. Historical perspectives, such as those focusing on the European Middle Ages, offer intriguing lenses for the exploration of how specific issues or certain ideas have been handled in previous cultures and what we might be able to learn from the solutions or responses offered there. The discussion of rape today, for instance, must always keep its historical dimensions in mind because it is predicated on specific concepts of the genders, which have always been constructed and negotiated throughout times insofar as they represent social positions—which is not to confuse gender with biological sex. In other words, they are the result of powerful debates, which then find numerous expressions in literary and/or artistic form.

Fictional literature might be situated far away from reality, hence might appear as meaningless for life in practical terms. But the opposite could also well be the case because here we come across the basic ideas and values of people and their society, that is, their mental concepts, revealing aspects of fear and hopes, dreams and worries, questions and responses, and so also practical experiences translated into the literary form.

Insofar as our modern world has grown out of the bedrock of the Middle Ages—of course, I do not want to discount antiquity here, but the differences between these almost polar epochs cannot be overlooked—rape, as it was discussed then, constituted a most painful and troublesome crime for medieval society and the medieval church, and it continues to be a severe challenge for us today as well. Both legal historians and historical criminologists might be best qualified to engage with the issue, as we know from numerous studies on the various types of laws issued in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, literary texts also contain most significant material to probe the crime of rape because here we can learn about people's reactions and feelings concerning this sexual transgression, or whether they regarded rape a crime in the first place.

Some of the texts that I have discussed in this book belong to the 'classical' canon of medieval German literature, such as Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and the anonymous *Nibelungenlied*. Many others, however, have either attracted only little interest, or might actually be completely new for the readers, even specialists of medieval and early-modern German literature. Mindful of the European context,

this book has also incorporated a number of examples from French, Spanish, Latin, and Italian literature. I have chosen this selection because these literary documents have allowed me to pursue a specific line of arguments concerning sexual violence committed against women in the Middle Ages and beyond. In some cases also men seem to be the victims of 'rape,' although no author, at least in the German context, ever specified this in any detail, as far as I can tell. Nevertheless, we have come across a number of cases where male violence against male prisoners or opponents, for instance, strongly suggests that a form of 'rape' has happened, as clearly expressed by way of excessive loss of blood and near-death experience in a brutal struggle. Of course, this is meant primarily in a metaphorical sense, certainly not sexual, but insofar as rape constitutes a profound abuse of another body in its physical and psychological dimension, we would not be far off the track to maintain such a thesis regarding men's abuse. At any rate, as soon as women emerge as significant figures in medieval literature, we also hear of their victimization, which constitutes the central focus of the present book.

Gender conflicts, both then and today, often tragically result in a violent clash, although we have regularly observed that the poets do not specifically focus on rape as such for its own sake (perhaps out of a legal interest), and instead deal with this sexual crime because larger political, military, and ideological concerns are at stake. Many times rape substitutes for physical fighting because it is more opportune for the male protagonists involved to utilize female victims—thereby masking the true intentions to challenge a male competitor—than to address the critical issue heads-on. In other words, many times, and probably today as well, accounts of rape tend to lead us astray about the underlying motifs and strategies, especially because they have fairly little to do with sexuality per se (see Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale"). In fact, many times we can safely assume that the rape committed truly served the perpetrator to combat and to humiliate his (male) opponent or enemies.

Most important, however, here we have identified numerous examples where women suffer from violence or are put under enormous stress, find themselves blackmailed and extorted, and finally yield to the oppressor, either physically or in material terms, handing over a desired object or granting access to their body. It would be wise, of course, to differentiate more specifically among the many aspects of violence exerted against women, with rape being one of the worst and dangerous ones. However, if we were to limit ourselves to very concrete cases only where a man violently penetrates a woman sexually, we would do a disservice to the complexity of the matter.

Certainly, when a father wants to commit incest with his daughter (*Apollonius of Tyre*), or when a brother in fact sleeps with his sister (Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius*), there is no doubt about the sexual nature of this act of violence. Many times, however, we have observed most difficult cases where a man abuses a

young woman's naiveté and seduces her to grant him sex in return for an object, such as an attractive animal ("Dis ist von dem heselin")! Then there are the examples of a wife who is wooed by a young man, but invites him into her house only after her own husband has encouraged her to do so because he wants to teach his competitor a lesson, presenting his own male potency, although at the end he utterly fails. Heinrich Kaufringer drew, of course, from a wide range of European sources (Boccaccio), and other authors later followed the same models, such as the anonymous composer of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.

This should alert us to the global issue involved, insofar as the case studies presented above do not claim to be genuinely and exclusively representative of social and legal conditions in medieval Germany. On the contrary, here I have tried to uncover the German contributions to a European phenomenon, or rather crime, as feminist/gender scholarship has discussed before. In this sense I hope that this study will be a meaningful addition to the broader topic concerning gender relationships, and will illustrate specific aspects within the German context, without losing sight of the fact that most of the texts investigated here drew from other sources and contributed to the larger pan-European discourse. Simply put, problems of gender and violent conflicts, sometimes leading even to rape, are, unfortunately, timeless, and so they also constitute crucial aspects of medieval and early-modern culture.

Curiously, I have not found any significant text where the topic of rape plays a major role that was composed by a woman, except for *Königin Sibille* by the Countess Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken. Instead, which is remarkable enough, many male authors, from Hartmann von Aue to the anonymous composer of the *Nibelungenlied*, from Heinrich von dem Türlin with his somewhat bizarre Arthurian romance *Diu Crône* to a variety of authors of verse narratives (*mæren*), then also early-modern writers of jest narratives (*Schwänke*) and poets of popular songs expressed deep concern with the crime of rape, or at least indicated indirectly that rape and the massive abuse of women (sometimes not sexual; instead in the form of hurtful deception) could have had a profound, negative, impact on their society at large. This does not mean, of course, that all of them would have to be identified as medieval 'feminists,' certainly an anachronistic term in our context. In fact, as the composers of specific songs contained in the *Carmina Burana* and the anonymous author of the epic poem *Nibelungenlied* signal, blatant misogyny could also determine the discussion of rape cases (see the *pastourellas*). Some of the *mæren* authors cared little for the well-being of their female characters who are abused by men. Others expressed their concern with the dangerous consequences of rape, but at closer analysis we can subsequently clearly perceive that they are more troubled about the social and political disruptions of their society than about women's suffering.

In the case of *Mauritius von Craûn*, for instance, the protagonist's crude behavior toward his lady does not necessarily address rape as such, if that is the right word in the first place. Instead, here we come across a global critique of the courtly world, and both the knight and his lady can be identified as culprits of the downfall of traditional social norms and values. Of course, Mauritius is the prime perpetrator, pushing his way into the marital bedroom, knocking out the husband, and rudely taking the latter's place next to his lady. But we might have to question her behavior as well that led to the knight's violent action, so this verse narrative truly emerges as a platform for the discussion of the multiple implications of abuse and rape both for the individual and society at large.

Predicating one of his narratives on the theme of rape, especially of a young girl, the *Schwänke* author Hans-Wilhelm Kirchhof primarily pursued a form of vitriolic anticlericalism, but he also drew from historical cases, as he often claims. In other words, exploring the meaning of rape allowed the author to investigate a sleuth of different purposes and strategies, concerns and interests. A rape narrative normally addresses a variety of topics, and is rarely limited to the issue of sexual violence per se. This also provides us with the opportunity to interpret some extreme cases where a man's physical violence against another man reaches an extreme degree and hence could be interpreted, in a way, also as rape, even if only in a metaphorical sense.

As the wide gamut of narratives and poems from the entire Middle Ages and beyond, which reflect on rape, demonstrates, both courtly and urban society constantly faced profound problems affecting the gender relationships and the tensions among the social classes, often expressed in sexual terms—rape. There are striking parallels between, for instance, Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken's *Königin Sibille* although they were separated from each other by ca. two hundred fifty years. These parallels find most striking expression in the portrayal of the dominant male characters who yet tend to reveal profound weakness in their identity and also deep social, moral, and ethical shortcomings. Each time the female protagonist is blamed and subsequently exposed to the danger of rape. In other cases the husband invites the rapist even into his own house to set up a trap, but then finds himself caught in his cowardice and thus involuntarily facilitates the rape of his own wife (Heinrich Kaufringer).

In a thirteenth-century courtly romance, Heinrich von dem Türlin's *Diu Crône*, the queen's near rape illustrates King Arthur's failure to protect his own wife, an expression of the rapid decline of the courtly world. By the same token, the numerous incidents of incest committed by a father with his own daughter (*Apollonius of Tyre*) or by a father who attempts to do so (*Mai und Beafloer*) also suggest how much the traditional family structure was in danger of falling apart, if it has ever been truly a safe haven for the female members, as the external perspective seems to indicate consistently.

* * *

Altogether, as ghastly as rape (or physical abuse and deception with the intent to rape) might be, it proves to be a most fruitful topic for broad social and ethical investigations of medieval and early-modern society. The regular treatment of rape does not only confirm a literary tradition from antiquity to modern times, it also reflects serious social problems in contemporary society. We would not be able to trace such a long sequence of fictional rape accounts from the Middle Ages to the early-modern world, characterized by a wide range of significant figure constellations, if rape had not represented a concrete criminal problem at all echelons of society throughout times and was perceived as a serious challenge for everyone somehow affected by it. Indeed, rape and date rape continue to be serious dangers until today, so our investigation of such crimes in medieval and early-modern German and European literature simply opens a window toward a more global perspective determined by the discursive character of rape.

When the medical doctor Chrippenchra in Heinrich Wittenwiler's peasant satire *Der Ring* rapes the young woman Mätzli Rüerenzumph, he does not only transgress his social and ethical norms and abuses his authority, he also destroys the basic trust among all people, which then finds its ultimate expression in the battle pitting two villages against each other who invite the entire world to join them in the fight. Only the cities refuse and wisely abstain from this total foolheartedness resulting in the complete destruction of Lappenhäusen and the death of the entire peasant population, except for the protagonist. In other words, as Wittenwiler indicates, rape has wider implications on a social, political, military, and hence also existential level and deserves a careful examination, particularly when it emerges as a significant topic within the literary texts of a specific time and culture, not to mention, of course, its legal treatment.

This gains additional weight when we consider the surprising interest in the theme of sexual abuse and violence by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poets of popular songs. Of course, there the topic of rape surfaces only fleetingly, and behind the camouflage of strong emotions, so as if there are no physical implications resulting from brutal rape. Nevertheless, even these "Volkslieder" at times do not shy away from touching on this crime and explore its impact on the victim, apparently because this proved to be a matter of public concern after all.

The more we analyze the evidence provided by the literary history, the more we uncover the dark sides of love and sexuality, regularly coupled with violence and abuse. In this sense, I believe, our examination of rape in medieval and early-modern German and European literature has touched on fundamental aspects and allowed us to gain insight into deep problems concerning the genders throughout time. More important, though, with the investigation of rape in this literary medium we also grasp and identify an important discourse on how to handle

sexual violence and what it means for the well-being of all of society. Ultimately, the discussion of rape in medieval and early modern literature sheds important light on broader social, ethical, and moral issues that still trouble and concern us deeply. Just as those poets had realized the global danger resulting from rape, we can now affirm the importance of investigating the treatment of rape through a literary lense.

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Contrary to modern assumptions, sexual violence and rape were treated as severe crimes in the Middle Ages. This book examines the testimony in medieval and early modern German literature as well as in some contemporary European Texts and traces the discourse on both aspects from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries. Most comments about rape come from male writers, and medieval literature contains numerous examples of rape scenes which are mostly viewed highly critically. Previous studies on this topic have focused on English, French, and Italian literature, whereas here the emphasis rests on German examples.

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